



"With Malice Toward None" to "A House Divided": The Impact of Changing Perceptions of Ritual and Sincerity on Elite Social Cohesion and Political Culture in Northern Song China, 1027-1067

Citation

Kroher, Martin Josef. 2014. "With Malice Toward None" to "A House Divided": The Impact of Changing Perceptions of Ritual and Sincerity on Elite Social Cohesion and Political Culture in Northern Song China, 1027-1067. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University.

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:13067681>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

“With Malice Toward None” to “A House Divided”:
The Impact of Changing Perceptions of Ritual and Sincerity on Elite Social Cohesion and
Political Culture in Northern Song China, 1027–1067

A dissertation presented
by
Martin Josef Kroher
to
The Department of East Asian Languages
and Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of
East Asian Languages and Civilizations

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

September 2014

“With Malice Toward None” to “A House Divided”:
The Impact of Changing Perceptions of Ritual and Sincerity on Elite Social Cohesion and
Political Culture in Northern Song China, 1027–1067

Abstract

At the heart of this dissertation lie two political events that hitherto have predominantly been interpreted from the perspective of the *xining* reform and the factional disputes that accompanied it: the so called *qingli* reform (1043–1045), and a ritual debate (*puyi* 1064–1066). One goal of this work is to assess these on their own merits, and in this way gain new insights for our understanding of Wang Anshi’s failure to maintain literati consensus in the *xining*-period, and the nature of 11th-century socio-political associations, or factions, in general.

A considerable number of counterexamples cast doubt on views that interpret opposing factions as the manifestation of pre-existing, intellectual or social structures, with firm boundaries between groups prior to the actual dispute. Instead, our discussion of said political events, and the social relationships of actors at the time showed that there were ample connections between leading figures both in the 1030s and ’40s, and prior to the *puyi* and *xining* disputes. It turned out that in both periods literati networks were much more diverse and ambiguous than the later disputes would suggest, but there was one crucial difference: earlier, literati had been much more likely to reestablish working relationships with erstwhile opponents and their networks, whereas such mending of fences appeared almost impossible in the latter half of the 11th century.

To explain the difference from an intellectual perspective, we have turned to an interpretation of ritual offered by Seligman et al., which due to its bearing on social relationships is pertinent to the question at hand. Drawing on a diversity of texts about ritual, as well as the actions and positions taken during the two political events, we argue that views of ritual changed during the period in question: whereas the *qingli* protagonists had taken ritual on its own terms, and in this way made social ritual usable to keep up and reestablish relationships through intellectual disagreements and political defeat, important later figures relegated ritual to being a part of their larger visions of integrated orders, and as a consequence it lost the mitigating potential it had had earlier.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	viii
Introduction: “Wang Anshi is throwing all under heaven into chaos” – a new way of connecting the normative failure of the <i>xining</i> reform project (1069–1074) to general intellectual and social trends of the 11th century	1
The normative-social failure of Wang Anshi’s reform project.....	7
The social and normative “consequences” of ritual	24
The theory and practice of ritual and sincerity, and its connection to <i>wen</i> and <i>dao</i>	45
Reappraising Song modernity through ritual and sincerity.....	77
Part I: With malice toward none? The <i>qingli</i> ‘faction of good men’ and their struggle for public recognition, 1027–1045	103
Chapter 1. Visions of ritual and its potential to regulate and connect different entities	110
Chapter 2. “I will not bend my body for riches or rank”: Fan Zhongyan’s complex relationship to his mentor Yan Shu.....	142
Chapter 3. The critique of the ‘good men’ against empty words and public gestures	161
Interlude – the ‘good men’ and Lü Yijian united?.....	191
Chapter 4. Being sidelined or promoted? The political situation at the outset of the <i>qingli</i> reform.....	197
Chapter 5. More than just institutions: the pivotal role of public recognition for ‘good men’ in the <i>qingli</i> reform program.....	215
Chapter 6. Getting past the damning term ‘faction’: the role of the emperor in the good men’s political defeat.....	255
Conclusions to Part I.....	293

Part II. A house divided – old and new ‘good men’ between cooperation and dispute 1057–1067	302
Chapter 1. Disseminating the ideas of ‘good men’: the rise of ‘sincerity’ and the ideal of public sphere, and its divisive potential in the last years of Renzong.....	307
Chapter 2. Coming to terms with a paradox: Sima Guang’s social and intellectual relationship to the <i>qingli</i> reform and its proponents	334
Chapter 3. A political alliance and two reluctant emperors: the campaign for the adoption and accession of Yingzong	370
Chapter 4. Taking the political perspective: rejection of mitigating ritual causes a socio-political division, also known as ‘factionalism’	406
Chapter 5. How to be sincere in a complex world – or – who is the hypocrite?.....	448
Conclusion: From savior to destroyer – Wang Anshi’s ambiguous relationship to the ‘good men’	492
Works cited	507

This dissertation is dedicated to the plights of a mother

Acknowledgments

Eight years ago I left Germany in the middle of a ‘Sommermärchen’, a summer’s fairy tale that in more ways than one has come to a good end this year, however preliminary this end must always remain, for as the saying goes, ‘nach dem Spiel ist vor dem Spiel’. This is the opportunity to thank those who had a part in my personal and academic tale of these years. Forgive me for not naming many names here; chances are that I would forget someone important, and so I cowardly will leave it to the reader, as well as to the persons in question, to fill in those blanks. Nevertheless I in this way wish to express my gratitude to my advisors and my teachers, in my dissertation committee, at Harvard, the University of Würzburg, and elsewhere, who have given encouragement and support to me along the way; I understand that at graduation we will act ‘as if’ this road had come to an end, but I fear that, alas, this will only be one of those subjunctives that this dissertation is talking about. The saying of the giants on whose shoulders I try to stand in this dissertation may appear to be another tacky academic metaphor, but it nevertheless is also true (again, in more than one way), for I profited tremendously from the input and instruction of those scholars and fellow students, near and far, in the department and elsewhere, who have shared their insights with me over the years, in person or in their writing. Without the generous financial support of numerous sources at Harvard, especially the Fairbank and the Reischauer Centers, but also the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, it would have been impossible to get to this point. I also want to thank my partner, Hazel, for helping me to always keep my head above the water when I was in it to my neck, and for all the things big and small that come with partnership.

Introduction: “Wang Anshi is throwing all under heaven into chaos”¹ – a new way of connecting the normative failure of the *xining* reform project (1069–1074) to general intellectual and social trends of the 11th century

An important prerequisite for my purposes is to define what is meant when talking of the failure of the reform project led by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086). In practical terms, the three groups of measures implemented by him between 1069² and his first fall from power in 4/1074 aimed at the following: improving the system of education and examination, and thus the recruitment and effectiveness of officialdom; increasing the readiness of the military, by, among other measures, reducing the standing army in favor of a militia recruited through an empire-wide effort to organize subjects into *baojia* units; finally, alleviating problems due to imbalances and resulting disproportional profit in local and national markets by direct state intervention in these markets. The last two groups of measures at the same time allowed the state to reduce its deficit, in that they lowered the expenses for the standing army, and put the institutional and ideological basis in place for the state to claim part of these disproportionate profits for the ‘common good’, that is, itself; another effect was to monetize parts of the tax system that hitherto had still been paid in kind and in services. One could argue that some of the individual initiatives were quite successful in solving the immediate practical problems of the time, and certainly that they would have a lasting impact on the Song. It would appear, for example, that the *baojia*-

¹ *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編. 20 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004². vol. 10, j. 252, p. 6169. (Henceforth: CB).

² Note that shortly after Shenzong’s accession in 1/1067, it became clear that he wanted to promote Wang Anshi to high posts, for the back and forth between backers and critics of Wang, and his promotion to prefect of Jiangning fu, see: CB. vol. 9, j. 209, p. 5086. See also his promotion to Hanlin scholar in 9/1067: *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian shibu* 續資治通鑑長編拾補. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004. vol. 1, j. 2, p. 51.

militia system indeed was able to take pressure off the regular army and thus made possible a reduction of its numbers and associated expenses, and it has been argued that despite the apparent military failures of the late Shenzong era (神宗 reg. 1067–1085) the military reforms had given the Song Dynasty a limited initiative that it had lacked since the beginning of the 11th century.³ Paul Smith has shown for localized interventionist economic measures in Sichuan that they were quite successful in generating profits and stimulating the local tea industry for the rest of the Northern Song;⁴ he and other authors have argued that, as far as statistical figures can be established for the 11th-century economy as a whole, they indicate an increased monetization, as well as increased state income around the time of the reforms, especially from non-agricultural sources, all of which shows that the markets and the ability of the state to intervene in them had attained a complexity and sophistication hitherto unknown, and all but unsurpassed by later dynasties.⁵ Finally, in spite of not being able to “maintain an elite consensus”, over the long term, Wang Anshi’s changes to the examination system seem to have had a lasting impact on literati,

³ Martin Kroher, “Die Heeresreformen der Regierungsperiode *xining*” [The Military Reforms of the Reignperiod *xining* 1068–1077], in: Dieter Kuhn, Ina Asim (eds.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Song-Zeit*. Heidelberg: edition forum, 2006. p. 55-141. While giving a somewhat overstated argument for the success of the military reforms, Zhao Dixian does have a point when he claims that the Song regained the initiative. Zhao Dixian 赵涤贤, “Shilun Bei Song bianfapai junshigaige de chenggong 试论北宋变法派军事改革的成功” [Preliminary discussion of the success of the military reforms of the Northern Song reform party]. *Song Liao Jin Yuan shi* (1998:2). p. 3-20. See also: Paul J. Smith, “*Shuihu zhuan* and the Military Subculture of the Northern Song, 960–1127.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 66:2 (Dec. 2006). p. 363-422.

⁴ Despite the eventually negative effects on producers that he describes. Paul J. Smith, *Taxing Heaven’s Storehouse: Horses, Bureaucrats, and the Destruction of the Sichuan Tea Industry, 1074–1224*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. p. 148, 218-219, 333-334.

⁵ William G. Liu, *Wrestling for Power: The state and economy in Later Imperial China, 1000–1770*. Harvard University, 2005 (Dissertation). p. 96-105, 154, 165. Paul J. Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shih,” in: Denis Twitchett, Paul J. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 347-483. Figures for increase in income resulting from the different measures: Green Sprouts: p. 418-419; Hired Service: p. 426-427; State Trade and general figures: p. 433-434.

for better or for worse.⁶ Failure also does not mean that these measures were completely abolished once and for all when the enemies of the reform came to power in 1085: some of them, including the *baojia*, actually continued to be influential and traceable for the remainder of the Northern Song and beyond, albeit in a different form than Wang had intended.⁷

And yet, despite this measurable impact, not just contemporary critics, but also later commentators, including the main figure of Neo-Confucianism, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), considered Wang Anshi and his reforms a failure.⁸ As the driving force behind the reform program, Wang had to resign for good in 1076, after a first year-long absence in 1074, and

⁶ Peter Bol, “Emperors Can Claim Antiquity Too: Emperorhip and Autocracy under the New Policies,” in: Patricia Ebrey, Maggie Bickford (eds.), *Emperor Huizong and late Northern Song China: the politics of culture and the culture of politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006. p. 173-205. New Policies as starting point for long-term change: p. 180-181; elite consensus: p. 203. See also description of larger consequences for elite society: Peter Bol, “Government, Society, and State: On the Political Visions of Ssu-ma Kuang and Wang An-shih,” in: Robert P. Hymes, Conrad Schirokauer (eds.), *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. p. 128-192. p. 190-191.

⁷ Note the description of the impact of the *baojia* measure, and its continued, if indirect influence in Southern Song in: Paul J. Smith, “*Shuihu zhuan* and the Military Subculture of the Northern Song.” The same goes for the Tea and Horse Trade described in *Taxing Heaven’s Storehouse*, and subsequently Smith argues in his Cambridge History of China contribution that the originally “progressive” goals of the reforms soon were supplanted by seeking profit for the state. In this he by and large follows the criticism by reform opponents. Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 414-415. Roslyn Hammers argues that the influence of Wang Anshi’s ideas is even traceable to an agricultural treatise of the Yuan Dynasty. This cannot be excluded, but this author remains unconvinced that the link was indeed as direct as Hammers argues. General claims to improving the lot of the farmers and society are too much of a trope to be traced to one specific source; the image and the poems cited are not specific and direct enough references to serve as conclusive proof of a political agenda that would replicate the reform purpose, as opposed to the goal of anthologizing all references to a topic that is so common in this kind of genre; from this perspective, Wang Zhen included Wang’s poems because he happened to have been someone who wrote about this topic, and included the image because it was another well-known contribution to it; finally, the alleged failure of Wang Anshi’s program and approach (at least in the eyes of his critics) made direct references to him and his reforms problematic, to say the least. All this seems to make it unlikely that Wang Zhen’s connection to Wang Anshi and his goals was as direct as the author suggests. Roslyn Lee Hammers, “Picturing Tools for a Perfect Society: Wang Zhen’s ‘Book of Agriculture’ and the Northern Song Reforms in the Yuan Dynasty.” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 42 (2012). p. 279-308.

⁸ See the different criticisms of Wang and the reforms, especially that Wang’s learning was insufficient, and that the reforms “instigated chaos”. *Zhuzi Yulei* 朱子語類 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). (Equivalent to Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985). j. 130, p. 3095-3101.

although the attempted return to the *status quo ante* in 1085 did not enjoy complete success either, the reforms had ceased to be a normatively meaningful, “integrated system”⁹ after Wang’s final resignation in 1076 at the latest. This is true regardless of the fact that for the remainder of the Northern Song both emperors and their ministers, in their actions and proclamations, would continue to make frequent references to the New Policies, and that political purges along assumed factional lines would remain a feature of this period. The disappearance of Wang Anshi from the political scene, with his normative vision and political standing, removed the common normative denominator, and gave free reign to existing tendencies that steered the reforms towards the purely pragmatic goals of increasing Song military might and generating revenue, goals which hitherto had merely been one side and selling point of Wang Anshi’s larger vision of renewal. Given the scale and diverse nature of the reform measures, and the fact that most of them, stripped of their initial ethical thrust, continued to exist after Wang’s retirement, his fall from power and the subsequent failure of the program as a whole is hardly explicable by appealing to one practical, empirical factor that only affected one or one subset of the measures that concerned such diverse areas as the economy, elite education, the military, and society. Political factors such as the support or lack thereof from the emperor would of course have to be considered as well, but given the very favorable attitude of Shenzong towards Wang Anshi, the one other factor that is common to all of these measures is the role of literati criticism in

⁹ Bol at different times and in different ways has argued for an intricate connection between Wang’s political goals as proposed before his ascendancy to power, and his eventual reform program. He described the ‘Myriad Word Memorial’ (*Wan yan shu*) as proposing an integrated, self-perpetuating system, and shows how the later reforms as a whole reflect that idea. Bol, “Government, Society and State.” p. 162, 168-177. Peter Bol, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992. p. 217, 225-233, 248-250. Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. p. 73-75. Nevertheless the actual measures at times turned out to have cross purposes, such as the Hired Service Act that professionalized local administrative and military services, and the *baojia* that provided the administrative means to conscript locals for these or similar services, which were also transferred to existing institutions and offices. See Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 425, 427-429.

discrediting every single one of the reforms, paired with Wang Anshi's attempts to silence the dissenters. Scholars have rightly pointed out that Wang Anshi already in his famous memorial of 1058 had talked of the need for the emperor to be decisive and resolute in quelling resistance by "opportunists" to the necessary reforms, given the experience of the *qingli* reform.¹⁰ However, that should not hide the fact that at the same time Wang also claimed that a majority of officials eventually would go along with the reforms, by being convinced or coerced, educated in the right way, or induced by incentives to do the right thing.¹¹ Put differently, despite having all but professed his willingness to attack and oust critics from early on, the goal and promise of Wang still was all-encompassing social unity, certainly among the elite.¹² Yet, this is precisely what did not come to pass after he came to power, judging by the long series of bitter, public quarrels about the right course of action that ensued soon after Wang Anshi came to court; as Bol put it, the reformers had "failed in one signal respect: they did not establish and maintain an elite consensus."¹³ In fact, certain personnel decisions from the early Shenzong reign, such as the promotion of Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and Su Che 蘇轍 (1039–1112) may speak to the fact that Wang Anshi in the beginning of his tenure actually made a conscious attempt to adhere to the unifying rather than the divisive side of his program, and chose these literati not because

¹⁰ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign." p. 360. 'Myriad Words Memorial' 萬言書 AKA 上仁宗皇帝言事書. *Quan Song wen* 全宋文. 360 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 2006. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 341. (Henceforth: QSW).

¹¹ That is the gist of other passages: QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 335, 340-341, 342. See translation by Williamson: H. R. Williamson, *Wang An shih: A Chinese Statesman and Educationalist of the Sung Dynasty*. 2 vols. London: Probsthain, 1935. vol. 1, p. 65-66, 78-80, 83. He also pointed out that only about 1 percent of officials was either good or bad, with the vast majority being neither; the sages took this into account and made sure that their measures targeted this mediocre majority to carry out their ideas.

¹² Bol, "Government, Society, and State." p. 171.

¹³ Bol, "Emperors Can Claim Antiquity Too." p. 202. Once again it is not quite clear if the public dissent represented a majority of literati.

they agreed with him politically, but because they were considered financial experts by their contemporaries.¹⁴ Soon, however, these and other nominal and erstwhile supporters of the reforms started to voice their differing opinions on specific measures, and turned into, or were seen by Wang Anshi, as full-blown opponents of the reform project as a whole. In other words, while usually starting with criticism of a specific measure, or an aspect of it, it was the fact that both supporters and critics of that measure were unable to see it as an isolated issue and instead inadvertently connected it to the larger project, and to more abstract and normative ideas about what and who was ‘good’ and ‘bad’, that caused the turmoil and led to a general sense of failure. It is true that the economic measures, the Green Sprouts Loans first and foremost, became the center of attention, among both supporters of reform and their critics, as Smith argues in his narrative.¹⁵ However, I remain unconvinced that we should draw from this debate and criticism the conclusion that it was the actual failure of the economic reforms to really achieve Wang Anshi’s redistributionist goal that doomed the reform program; firstly, this claim was the only avenue left to reform critics to get the emperor’s attention given Wang Anshi’s influence over the emperor otherwise, and secondly, for most of the critics it was a foregone conclusion that the measures that Wang and his allies proposed could only lead to disaster for the people, because they violated fundamental ethical principles, or were implemented by bad people; we will see shortly that at the end of the day what was at stake for both sides was an absolute moral question, not a relative, empirical one.¹⁶

¹⁴ Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 379.

¹⁵ Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 383-384; recounting the critique of the measures: p. 435-446.

¹⁶ This is not to say that the reform measures could not have a negative impact in certain areas and under certain conditions (such as the case of Sichuan that Su Shi drew on, Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 442), or if implemented by officials with the wrong incentives; Smith’s argument that redistribution turned into state profit-making is also very plausible (p. 394, 414). However, this very development of the reforms is indicative of the key

The normative-social failure of Wang Anshi's reform project

Failure in this case thus means that these measures, the personnel policy, together with the underlying normative ideas and hopes, as an integrated whole were unable to fulfill the expectations set in them, expectations that did not stop at alleviating the practical problems of the time, but aimed at a grander, normative vision of social and political renewal and unity. This vision was different from, but still fit with, Shenzong's own, more immediate goals of military conquest.¹⁷ Its foundation was explained by Wang Anshi when Emperor Shenzong asked him about Tang Taizong (reg. 626–649), the founding emperor of the previous major dynasty, whose reign Wang still had hailed as a latter-day example in the aforementioned 'Myriad Words Memorial'.¹⁸ Now, Wang Anshi replied:

problem of both the reformers and their critics: the welfare of 'the people' as a whole, or its absence, had to remain an ethical claim that in the absoluteness that it was offered could not possibly be verified or falsified, because the answer would always have to be relative, not absolute. While the initial goal of the Tea and Horse Agency, to procure horses for the military, was not normative and therefore measurable in itself, I do think Smith's description of how it expanded and turned towards generating profits, and of what incentives were used to motivate officials is instructive in this regard (Smith, *Taxing Heaven's Storehouse*. p. 139-146, 177-190, 308-309). The point is that it was much easier to verify the success of the reforms or of individual officials by counting the income that the state had earned than by measuring the abstract effect on 'the people', which is why the general development of the measures almost as a matter of course went in the direction of making measurable profit, especially after the demise of Wang Anshi. Even the numerous erstwhile supporters that turned against the reforms ultimately changed their minds on ethical grounds, however much this change of hearts may have been based on their personal experience of the reforms and the way they were implemented. E.g. the initiators of the state trade measure Zeng Bu and Wei Jizong attacked the morals of the people who were administering the measure, not their measure itself (Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign." p. 443). Because their perspective was an ethical one, both the critics and the supporters would be able to find arguments for their respective opinion in the diverse information that they must have received, even if one assumes that some of that information was accurate, and that overall the measures did more harm than good initially, as was to be expected for such far-reaching changes; given the diversity of the issue and the situation on the ground, ultimately they could not know the 'real' effect on the welfare of 'the people' in the country as a whole, and neither can we. The fact that critics would claim that the measures *both* helped and harmed engrossers/rich families is a case in point for the argument that we should read these memorials as claims, at best based on anecdotal evidence, but not reflecting the situation as a whole (Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign." p. 439, 442, 444-445).

¹⁷ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign." p. 464.

¹⁸ QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 342.

Your Majesty ought to model yourself on Yao and Shun (the legendary rulers of antiquity), why would you draw on Tang Taizong for your actions? The Dao of Yao and Shun is very simple and not complicated, most useful and not impractical, extremely easy and not hard, but the scholars of latter generations are unable to thoroughly understand it, and erroneously assume that it is too lofty to be attained.¹⁹

It was of course not unheard of to draw on historical precedents and invoke the sage rulers of antiquity when making an argument, but the following passage from the memorial ‘On the Five Major Policies’ explains the intricate and, as we shall see, not commonplace link between this ideal and the concrete reform measures:

Your Majesty has been on the throne for five years, the reform measures undertaken number in the thousands, and the documents that they have been issued in, the regulations by which they were established, and the advantages achieved, are too numerous [to be counted]. If one seeks to enumerate them, and asks which of the regulations are the most important, the effects of which of them are most advanced, and which of them elicited the most discussions, then there are five policies [that are most important]: pacifying the Rong barbarians is the first one, the Agricultural Loans Measure (*qingmiao (qian)* 青苗錢) is the second, the Local Service Act (*mianyi (fa)* 免役法) is the third, the *baojia* militia (保甲) is the fourth, and the State Trade Measure (*shiyi (fa)* 市易法) is the fifth. Today, [...] the policy of pacifying the Rong already was effective.

It used to be the case that the poor were charged interest by the elite households; today’s poor are being charged interest by officials; the officials charge a lower interest, and the people are rescued from their poverty; therefore the decree about the crops loans already works. Just for the Local Service Act, the Militia, and the State Trade Measure is it not yet clear if these three bring great benefits or will do great harm. If one obtains the right kind of people to implement them, then they will carry tremendous benefits, if one fails to get the right kind of people, then they will cause great harm. [...] The commentary [to the Shujing] says: ‘A policy that is not modeled on antiquity, and yet is suitable to last forever, is unheard of.’ These three measures can be said to be modeled on antiquity. But one has to know the Dao of antiquity, only then can one implement the measures of antiquity, this is what I mean by great benefit and great harm. [The remainder of the passage discusses the ancient precedents for the three latter reform measures, emphasizing their close connection to ancient precedents and ideas, as well as detailing the potential benefits and problems that could be caused by securing, or failing to secure the right men for the jobs.]²⁰

Notwithstanding the constant references, here and elsewhere, to practical issues and the situation of the common people, this passage makes clear that it is a normative, not an empirical claim that lies at the heart of the reforms. One could even argue that here Wang was indirectly admitting to problems with his reforms, when describing what can go wrong when they are administered in the wrong way; however, he insisted that this was a problem of the officials in charge of them, rather than the reform project itself. On the one hand, linking the measures to ancient models in

¹⁹ *Song shi* 宋史. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985. vol. 30, j. 327, p. 10543. (Henceforth: SS).

²⁰ 上五事劄子. QSW. vol. 64, j. 1382, p. 7-8.

this way all but removed them from the scope of debate; charging them with this overblown normative meaning makes it hard to discuss even the details of the policies in a meaningful way. On the other hand, when insisting that one needed to find the right people to administer the measures, the success of the measures, and implicitly one's support for them, becomes a litmus test of sorts for the correct knowledge of the Dao of the ancients; a knowledge which becomes a normative demand more than anything else, in the absence of more empirical information, as well as in view of the admission elsewhere that due to historical change one needed to follow the intention of the ancients, rather than their exact model.²¹ Wang Anshi claimed to know what it is that the sages intended, and the reforms could only be successful if one promoted men that knew that as well, or at least did not act on their divergent opinion.²² It is only consequent then that, when discussing why his opponent Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) should not be entrusted with a position at court, Wang Anshi claimed: “if the officials that have a position at court are not unified in their mind (*xin* 心) and unified in their virtue, and [do not] cooperate in bringing about unity, then none of the policies of the empire will be enacted.”²³ Of course, seen in isolation it makes perfect sense politically to keep an opponent from gaining an influential position at court, but his harsh reaction to any kind of dissent was more than just a political necessity.²⁴ Together with the totalizing normative claim he in my view proposes for virtually every single one of his reform measures, it instead would become a political liability that

²¹ 上仁宗皇帝言事書. QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 329.

²² Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 164. As Wang Anshi twice declared elsewhere, it was acceptable to disagree, but after the decision was made it was unacceptable to act on it. Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 366, 375.

²³ CB. vol. 9, j. 213, p. 5169.

²⁴ Bol. “Government, Society, and State.” p. 171.

eventually caused even his political allies to turn away; therefore, when (Grand) Empress Dowager Cao (1016–1079)²⁵ lamented in 1074 that “Wang Anshi is throwing all under heaven into chaos”, she expressed a sentiment that in view of the political upheaval among literati was hard to disagree with: Wang Anshi had failed to achieve the normative goal of his reforms of ‘returning to antiquity’ and bringing about socio-political unity. Rather than trying to empirically verify the assertions of his critics about the practical failures of the reforms, the focus of this study therefore will be on the origin and problems of this normative claim, and the wider social repercussions that it had.

One could simply dismiss this, what in my view is a close linkage of concrete policies to normative claims, as idiosyncratic, unrealistic, and originating solely from Wang Anshi’s own mistaken judgment, and among the literati he certainly had the most concrete and radical ideas about a normative unity based on ideas from antiquity, and about how these directly translated into concrete policies. And yet, it seems that in a more general sense such a normative vision of social and political renewal in the face of the current crisis, if in very different ways, was shared by many at the time, including later opponents of the reform;²⁶ while these opponents made ample reference to alleged concrete problems of the reforms, much like Wang Anshi pointed to concrete successes of his reforms, the following passage shows that a critic such as Sima Guang had his own way of linking his criticism to abstract norms:

²⁵ 曹太皇太后, posthumously also known as Cisheng Guangxian Empress 慈聖光獻皇后.

²⁶ Peter Bol has provided us with a survey of these normative claims made by different thinkers of the time. Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. In another article, he also offers an analysis and overview of the changing roles of antiquity in ideological arguments from early Tang to *daoxue*. Peter Bol, “When Antiquity Matters: Thinking about and with Antiquity in the Tang-Song Transition,” in: Dieter Kuhn, Helga Stahl (eds.), *Perceptions of Antiquity in Chinese Civilization*. (Würzburger Sinologische Schriften) Heidelberg: edition forum, 2008.

The emperor asked: The Han as a rule abided by the laws of Xiao He (their first chancellor) and did not change them, is that possible? He (Sima Guang) answered: Indeed, not only the Han did so. If the rulers of the Three Dynasties had constantly abided by the laws of Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu, it would have been possible to preserve [these laws] even until today. Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty adopted the restrictions of (Han) Gaozu [merely] in a disorderly and altered way, and bandits occupied half the empire; Emperor Yuan changed the policies of Emperors Xiao and Xuan, and the cause of the Han Dynasty subsequently went in decline. When talking about it with these [examples] in mind, the laws of the ancestors (that is, the institutions of the dynastic founders, as well as the policies of previous emperors) cannot be changed.²⁷

It is obvious from this text that Sima Guang had a very different idea of the normative goals of politics, nevertheless, his own version had the same effect as Wang Anshi's claim had, of locking concrete policy questions into a normative framework that made it hard to address their practical implications. While it may have been more apparent to contemporaries what the laws and institutions of the dynastic founders were than what the intention of the sage rulers of antiquity had been, the result was similar: it gave these measures or their reversal quasi-constitutional rank, and made a critical appraisal of the effects on the ground difficult. It was, for example, hardly possible to discuss the actual impact of a scheme such as the Agricultural/Green Sprouts Loans on the populace, when such a discussion was overshadowed by the ethical question of whether or not the state should charge interest in the first place, and when practical problems in the eyes of the discussants by default became ethical ones – either exposing the evil nature of officials seeking profit, as well as the normative problems of a scheme that violated how government should act, or indicating the executing literati's lack of knowledge of the Dao of antiquity.

In general it is of course not uncommon for policies to have normative goals, and to support one's political argument in favor or against a certain measure by drawing on commonly accepted norms and values. However, as Part I on the protagonists of the earlier *qingli* reforms will show,

²⁷ SS. vol. 31, j. 336, p. 10764.

it was not a matter of course that practical reform measures in Song-China, down to their very particulars, would be charged with normative, ethical meaning in the way that they were by Wang Anshi and Sima Guang. Indeed it is hard to see how these measures could be seen as being so intricately connected to the fabric of the state that the resulting change, or failure to change, would endanger its very existence, notwithstanding the very real effects that these schemes could have on local communities and the state as a whole; while one could discuss the underlying values of the proposals and the arguments against them ('interventionist' in the case of Wang Anshi's reforms, 'conservative' in the case of Sima Guang's reversal, if one were to put a label on them), at the end of the day they merely distributed cheaper loans to farmers, or had the populace pay an additional tax instead of service owed to local administrations. Even granted that these eventually would turn into money-making operations first and foremost, as Smith has argued,²⁸ in the absence of more reliable information on the effects of these measures on 'the people', the only statement we can make for sure is that it *did* fill the state's coffers, and that whatever problems it had did *not* lead to a collapse of the system as a whole at this point. This disconnect between cause and intensity of the debate is especially noteworthy in view of the divisive, instead of unifying consequences that these totalizing normative claims had for the political culture and the literati community as a whole.

As a matter of fact, in the guise of accusations of factionalism and the historical narrative of factional strife, the failure to create social unity, for contemporaries and posterity alike is one of the prominent features of the time and figures large in many explanations for Wang's failure, and

²⁸ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign." p. 394, 414.

in fact for the subsequent demise of the Northern Song.²⁹ However, from the proscription lists of the waning years of Northern Song down to modern historians, this narrative of factionalism attempted to clearly define and delineate the factional fault lines, at times using elaborate schemes of underlying structures and motives. The problem with a historical narrative that concentrates too much on permanent factions and structural explanations is that, in spite of the high level of nuance with which some authors phrase their specific explanations, they still tend to take contemporary accusations leveled at political opponents at face value, accusations that assumed that the opponents were an organized, coherent, and malevolent body of officials that conspired to promote their own personal interests or evil schemes.³⁰ Thus they lose sight of the fact that it is the very vulnerability and volatility of political and social connections, and the utter breakdown of existing social relationships between the actors that should be highlighted. Rather than emphasizing the strength of these affiliations, or of underlying socio-economic and kinship structures, it is this volatility and fragmentation of the political scene that needs be put to the foreground of any explanation for the political events surrounding the rise and fall of Wang Anshi.³¹

²⁹ Liu Xuebin points more generally to the failure of the *shi* as a whole during these factional strives, and their subsequent historical responsibility for the fall of the Northern Song. Accordingly, he explicitly treats the two sides as a unit. Liu Xuebin 刘学斌, *Bei Song xin jiu dangzheng yu shiren zhengzhi xintai yanjiu* 北宋新旧党争与士人政治心态研究. Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 2009. p. 86-88, 178.

³⁰ Levine describes this “common language” of factionalism in detail: Ari Daniel Levine, *Divided by a Common Language – Factional Conflict in Late Northern Song China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008.

³¹ A definition offered by Wechsler and used by Levine sees factions as having “long-term common interests and common objectives” and forming an “alignment of significant duration”. It is interesting that in his study of factionalism in early Tang, Wechsler failed to find common criteria to justify speaking of factional politics in that period. Howard J. Wechsler, “Factionism in Early T’ang Government,” in: Arthur F. Wright, Denis Twitchett (eds.), *Perspectives on the T’ang*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973. p. 87-120. p. 87, 119. Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 181n.

While most scholars provide a much more nuanced picture than can be done justice to in this brief overview, I think it is fair to say that in different combinations and with different emphases most historians writing about this topic subscribe to the following basic assumptions:³² one version of the argument for fixed factional structures would have it that groups of literati with shared ideas clashed over policies that were either based on these ideas or ran counter to them.³³ Another focus rests on the idea that dissent was caused by and ran along the lines of common economic interests that were seen as either furthered or endangered by those reforms that aimed at reducing the economic power of the local wealthy; the latter were considered to be identical or connected to Northern families that appeared to make up the bulk of the opponents of reform.³⁴ Yet another, related facet of this explanation emphasizes that the reform efforts and their failure are the political expression of the social problem posed by increasing numbers of examination graduates, who were competing for a limited number of offices, leading to clashes of new men with established families bent on preserving their elite status.³⁵ Especially for Hartwell, and for his student Hymes, social ties such as kinship, marriage, and networks of patronage and friendship appear to form the underlying structure of political factions, and changes of leadership

³² James T. C. Liu, *Reform in Sung China – Wang An-shih (1021–1086) and his new policies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959. Liu lists all three facets of this argument (p. 30-40), adding his own typology of the officials involved, based on moralizing categories such as “idealistic” or “abusive” (p. 70-80).

³³ Liu, *Reform in Sung China*. p. 30-35; Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 212-213, 252-253.

³⁴ Mainly Liu, but appearing in passing in Robert Hartwell, “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China, 750–1550.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42:2 (1982). p. 365-442. p. 421-422.

³⁵ Coined by Hartwell in “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China”, further developed by Robert Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-Chou, Chiang-Hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. This is combined in the conclusion with his own focus on intellectual communalities and differences in Peter Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 189-190.

and social pressure the immediate cause of their crisis.³⁶ The point here of course is not to question the fact that there indeed existed social ties of various forms, that actors such as Wang Anshi and Sima Guang had major ideological differences,³⁷ or that the political events had the potential to put more pressure on families to change their social strategy within the larger social developments from Northern to Southern Song;³⁸ however, as we shall see shortly, the problem is that the assumption of coherent, clearly definable groups that is at the heart of each of these arguments is not borne out by what we know from the sources and biographies. This fact first and foremost diminishes the immediate explanatory value of these more general, structural findings for the political events and particularly for the acute personal clashes of the actors that happened at this moment, but it also has wider implications for how we understand and talk about these social phenomena.³⁹

There are many examples of ties or changes of ties and of breaks between literati that go against these notions of preexisting factions and underlying structures, a number that is too large to be explained away as exceptions and indeed needs to become part of the explanation for the failure of the reforms and the decline of political culture. Families were being ripped apart by political

³⁶ Robert Hartwell, "New Approaches to the Study of Bureaucratic Factionalism in Sung China: A Hypothesis." *Bulletin of Song-Yuan Studies* 18 (1986). p. 33-40. p. 34-36.

³⁷ Bol, "Government, Society, and State."

³⁸ Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*. p. 121-122.

³⁹ Conversely, Beverly Bossler has argued that factionalism did not have much of a long-term impact on the families of great councilors. Beverly Bossler, *Powerful Relations – Kinship, Status, and the State in Sung China (960–1279)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998. p. 62-67.

struggle,⁴⁰ affinal kin found themselves on opposite sides of the divide,⁴¹ and supposed close associates were falling out with each other.⁴² Recommenders were ousted by the recommended who in turn felt betrayed by officials they had recommended for a position.⁴³ Southerners would eventually go against southerners⁴⁴ and northerners disagree with northerners about how the reforms could best be undone.⁴⁵

At this point, the case of what would become one of the more prominent anti-reformers, Lü Gongzhu 呂公著 (1018–1089) should be sufficient to stand as an example for many others to refute the validity of the differing claims about the role of existing social ties and static structures in the political struggles: as we know, Lü was connected to Wang Anshi prior to the reforms, in fact they seem to have formed a close group with the Han brothers (Han Wei 韓維 1017–1098, Han Jiang 韓絳 1012–1088) that despite their diverse backgrounds from both established and aspiring families worked successfully together to bring each other into highest office; moreover,

⁴⁰ Such as Wang Anguo, brother of Wang Anshi who is said to have admonished him (SS. vol. 30, j. 327, p. 10558), Lü Jiawen, member of the influential Lü clan that was anti-reform after the fall-out between Lü Gongzhu and Wang (SS accounts how Jiawen betrays his (great-)uncle Lü Gongbi, by showing his critical writings to Wang. SS. vol. 29, j. 311, p. 10214), Han Wei who fell out with Wang after having recommended him to Shenzong (SS. vol. 29, j. 315, p. 10307), while his brother Han Jiang lobbied for Wang's return after the first resignation (SS. vol. 29, j. 315, p. 10304).

⁴¹ Wu Chong, whose son was Wang Anshi's son-in-law, and yet he criticized the reforms (SS. vol. 29, j. 312, p. 10239).

⁴² In its anecdotal style, *Shao shi wenjian lu* describes how Wang sought the friendship of the Han and Lü families, as well as his contacts to other famous men of the time, "such as Sima Guang". Shao Bowen 邵伯溫, *Shao shi wenjian lu* 邵氏聞見錄. (Tang Song shiliao biji congkan). Beijing: Zhunghua shuju, 1983. j. 3, p. 24-25.

⁴³ Wang Anshi recommended and lauded Lü Gongzhu at first, and felt betrayed when he started to criticize the problems with the reforms (*Wenjian lu*. j. 12, p. 125). See also below.

⁴⁴ Eventually even Lü Huiqing started to criticize Wang for forcing his opinion on others (CB. vol. 11, j. 268, p. 6574).

⁴⁵ As the so called *Luo Shu/Chuan Shuo* factions would do in the Zhezong era (*Wenjian lu*. j. 13, p. 146).

other members of Lü's immediate family supported Wang much longer than Lü Gongzhu.⁴⁶ Thus, at the very least at the outset of the reforms, different backgrounds seemed insufficient to keep literati of new and old families from cooperating with each other; the divide between the two cannot have been large enough to be the sole cause of friction. As to the economic interests of the critical literati, it is curious that in the beginning of the debates on the controversial Green Sprouts/Agricultural Loans measure (2/1069) Lü Gongzhu gave the impression that, despite his criticism about its current nationwide implementation, he still could be convinced of the desirability of the measure, should it indeed prove beneficial to the people after some more years of experimentation. Lü vehemently spoke out against administrators seeking to make profits, and asked the court to dismiss the officials in charge, who in his view were not the right people for the job. However, he otherwise made constructive suggestions as to how to rescue the Green Sprouts Act, by putting other people in charge and testing it on a smaller scale for a longer period of time in an area around the capital.⁴⁷ Most importantly, the scheme should only be a benefit for the people, and not aim to make profit. This would make it unlikely that he saw personal or peer economic interests as being at stake, given that this would still amount to the utter destruction of the local loan market, in the areas around the capital in which as member of an established Northern family he was supposedly best connected.⁴⁸ In connection with this it is interesting to see that the first edict on the Green Sprouts measure did not stipulate any fixed interest rate, contrary to what we know from the text above about how this part of the reform was

⁴⁶ *Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 24. His biography in SS also claims that Wang Anshi sought to be close to the Lü and Han families to give him the necessary political connections for his success (SS. v. 30, j. 327, p. 10542). For Lü Jiawen's story, again see SS. vol. 29, j. 311, p. 10214.

⁴⁷ QSW. vol. 50, j. 1093, p. 279-280.

⁴⁸ Wealthy private lenders would find it hard to compete with a state that offered loans on conditions that merely sought to maintain the capital stock.

implemented; the replenishment of the loan capital made necessary by defaulting creditors seems to have been intended to come from the fluctuations in market price for grain – according to this early document the government was not supposed to profit from these transactions in any way.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Lü Gongzhu's insistence that no interest should be charged would point to fundamental ideological reasons for his opposition to the reforms. However, as we have seen, the first official edict itself emphasizes that making profit for the state coffers was not the goal.

Moreover, in the same month, and while sending up other critical memorials, Lü Gongzhu supported educational and military measures proposed and started by Wang, and argued for them

⁴⁹ SS. vol. 13, j. 176, p. 4279-4280. Firstly, in the original form of the first edict the scheme appears merely to be a way to make use of excess cash that would be available in the course of the Ever Lasting (and Charitable) Granaries fulfilling their function of buying grain when it was cheap and selling grain when it was expensive, a scheme that presumably allowed the granary not only to replenish its capital over the course of a year, but also to make a profit by acting against the cyclical grain market. Judging by this edict, the capital for the loans was supposed to be the excess cash profit available in winter when the granary administration would sell grain to lower the market price; presumably the necessary capital for summer transactions (buying grain to level out prices) would have been set aside, and not handed out as loans. Farmers would be given a loan of cash, and “entirely according to their convenience” would have a choice of paying it back in kind or, if the “market price at the time was high”, in cash with the tax owed in the coming summer and autumn. The wording of this stipulation suggests that the farmers would be paying the loan back at the winter grain/cash exchange rate, rather than at the current one. In this way, there would be an incentive for farmers to pay back in kind, given that the grain prices ordinarily would be lower at the time of the summer and autumn tax, and they would have to sell more grain in order to obtain the sum of the original loan in cash. The edict emphasizes that the government would not seek to profit from the income of any of these schemes, and therefore the main goal of the Green Sprouts Loans in this version seemed to have been to return the profits of the granary to the farmers by, in a way, buying futures on their grain at the current, higher price, while assuming all the risks of price fluctuation. In addition to that, the payments in kind at a time of grain surplus would also siphon grain out of the market, which in turn could be sold dear to lower prices in winter, by and large replenishing the original loan. In cases of unforeseen price fluctuations or default despite the generous repayment policies stipulated, no original granary capital would have been lost, and the ordinary granary scheme presumably would in short time be able to generate a surplus that could be handed out again. Of course for this operation to work, a knowledgeable and attentive official would be required to manage it, especially compared to the simpler scheme implemented later that included interest, but it still would seem that in theory this could work without the state charging interest, and without depleting the capital of the granaries. Some critics would later refer to that original edict when attacking the measure, and protest that the original stipulations and goals had been honored in the breach. See memorial by Han Qi: *Changbian shibu*. vol. 1, j. 7, p. 302. This, together with the fact that Wang Anshi at first had promoted officials to reform positions who would go on to criticize him severely, such as Su Che and Cheng Hao (Smith, “Shen-tsung's Reign.” p. 379), shows that a narrative that draws too direct a line between Wang Anshi's pre-reform economic thought and the profiteering way that the reforms turned out is not quite capturing the dynamic of the development, for it seems that in the beginning of Wang's tenure he in fact tried to avoid these contentious issues, and was not as discerning in whom he promoted as he would become later.

in ways that show that at this point he either more or less shared the larger ideological assumptions about antiquity and the importance of the *Zhouli* 周禮 that Wang stood for, or had no qualms about pretending that he did.⁵⁰ It was only when he had the impression that none of his suggestions were heeded that he ended his constructive participation and asked to resign.⁵¹ Apart from this sequence of events, it is also their own surprise and disappointment about their falling out that seems to rule out long-term factors such as fixed ideologies or social differences as its cause – a disappointment that is directly recounted in the sources for Wang Anshi, and indirectly attested to by Lü Gongzhu's reluctant withdrawal from politics, and the anecdotes that describe Wang's earlier, close relationship with Lü.⁵² In other words, despite having differences in attitude and opinion in some areas, at first it had been possible to work together, recognize common goals and common ideas, as well as differentiate between those measures that they agreed on, and those that they did not; in short, there was enough common ground for an open debate. In this context it is irrelevant whether or not Lü Gongzhu was sincere in his constructive participation, the point is to show that at this time cooperative, compromising behavior such as this was still possible in spite of political differences. At this point, for one of the most prominent opponents the promise of elite unity still seems to have been within the realm of possibility.

⁵⁰ QSW. vol. 50, j. 1093, p. 281, 288. While the latter memorial uses the Tang precedent of *fuwei/fubing* to argue for an enlistment moratorium for the professional army, and for discussing militia or conscription schemes, it still starts with the assumption that this more recent scheme was closest to how it had been done in antiquity. While he justifies the stipulations of the Song founders with their precarious situation, there is no sense that one had to stick to their institutions. Both the education and the military reform had to be done very slowly and carefully, in his opinion.

⁵¹ QSW. vol. 50, j. 1094, p. 295. The tone in the memorials before this one became increasingly defiant and alarmist. Here we also see references to the original edict, see above (QSW. vol. 50, j. 1093, p. 291-294).

⁵² *Wenjian lu*. j. 12, p. 125.

A much cited passage in the Myriad Words Memorial serves to show that Wang Anshi early on had spoken of the need to crush dissent, referring to a menacing quote from the Book of Odes about the use of force and punishments to crush opposition:

This tells us that King Wen first had to use force and punishments, and then got his will in the realm. Thus, when the former kings wished to set up institutions and standards, in order to reform weak and bad customs and develop the talents of the people, despite the hardship that using force and punishments brought with it, they still endured it and implemented these; they believed that if they did not do so, they would be unable to accomplish anything (*youwei* 有爲).[...]

Today you possess the might of all under heaven, you [already] occupy the position of the former kings, when you initiate and set up an institutional system, the hardship of using force and punishments is not [the same for you as that which the former kings had to endure]; although there are [some] opportunists who are discontent and oppose it, they certainly are no match for the vast number of people in the realm who are obedient and pleased [with such an endeavor]. Therefore it would be misguided if, as soon as there are statements by people who adhere to opportunism and [bad] conventions, one would then stop dead in one's tracks and not dare to act. If your Majesty really is determined to develop the talent of all under heaven, then I wish you to be decisive about it without fail.⁵³

Wang Anshi here calls on the emperor to be decisive in his actions, and when necessary ignore or crush those who would offer opposition to the reforms; at the same time, however, his assumption is that in a situation such as the current one, where the emperor was well established in his position, it would be easier for him to do that, especially given that a majority would go along with the reforms and support them in Wang's opinion. Given these early, menacing statements it appears curious that Wang would employ literati with conflicting interests and ideas in the first place; if one assumes that divisive factors such as these were known and in the open already, the question remains why Wang Anshi and others still appeared surprised by the extent of the political discord that his measures caused. It is much more likely, therefore, that Wang Anshi had been led to believe that the literati he helped to promote were either his allies, or would at least be among the majority that would go along with the reforms; after all, Lü

⁵³ QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 341. Note that taken with previous parts of the memorial, which talk about "another time when the court wanted to implement reforms", the passage appears to be mainly referring to the resistance to that part of the *qingli* reforms that "developed talent", that is, the changes in education and promotion that affected literati most directly; this would further seem to qualify how much resistance Wang Anshi expected against his other reforms.

Gongzhu was not the only later critic of the reform who had cooperated with Wang Anshi in the beginning of his tenure, or had recommended him earlier: together with aforementioned examples such as Han Wei, but also the Cheng brothers and Su Che, who had either argued for reforms earlier, or before falling out with him had occupied positions in the early Wang Anshi administration,⁵⁴ we see that, rather than just being a factional outgrowth of underlying social and ideological structures, all these problems seem to point to a far-reaching change in the nature of relationships between literati-officials over the time period in question that, one affected all actors and groups in a similar way; as already alluded to above, this even affected the opponents of the reform when their turn came to implement their ideas after the death of Shenzong.⁵⁵ Concretely, this change was from a state where compromise and cooperation was possible and even desired among officials in spite of different backgrounds and ideas, to a situation in which such cooperation was becoming increasingly difficult and impossible; while for some time it seemed that associations that appeared to have common ideas or enemies would be able to supplant the more inclusive groups, eventually this pervasive discord even affected literati who should have had shared interests and intentions. A key witness for this claim is the reformer Lü Huiqing 呂惠卿 (1032–1110), who in 1075, when asking for his resignation from office after having cooperated for several years with Wang Anshi on the implementation of the reforms, accused the reform leader of wanting the state to become like an army in his efforts to make it uniform and stamp out resistance; in other words, eventually the overstated normative claims we

⁵⁴ Recommendation for Wang (and Lü Gongzhu in the same text) by Ouyang Xiu: QSW. vol. 32, j. 687, p. 252 (1054–55). Reform-friendly memorials by opponents of the *xining* reform: Cheng Hao: QSW. vol. 79, j. 1734, p. 325-327; Cheng Yi: QSW. vol. 80, j. 1750, p. 197-202. See above for Cheng Hao's and Su Che's participation in reform administration.

⁵⁵ *Wenjian lu*. j. 13, p. 146.

have found above, and the demand for outward uniformity that came with it caused even close allies to fall out with each other.⁵⁶

While acknowledging that political factions were volatile and fragmented, rather than stable entities, Ari Levine has argued that there existed a common phenomenon across intellectual and political divides at the time, the late Northern Song, in that all sides employed a common normative language to attack their opponents, a language that clearly differentiated superior men and lesser men (*junzi* 君子, henceforth translated as ‘good men’, *xiaoren* 小人), that is, it divided those good men who did not form a faction (*dang* 黨) from the bad men who did.⁵⁷ As we shall see shortly, I find the idea of a common intellectual phenomenon at work across political divides rather convincing, but in its particulars, some aspects of Levine’s argument appear problematic. Firstly, there is the fact that for the author the common language of factionalism and its basic effect on political culture remain essentially the same from the 1040s to the 1070s, and beyond: despite the fact that authors of faction theories offered different arguments, they still largely did so from “within [...] the conceptual frameworks of classical hermeneutics and historical analogism;”⁵⁸ the common divisive language employed in this period for Levine indicates that, with one well-known exception that proved the rule which will be discussed below, actors remained hemmed in by classical tradition and their predecessors’ discourse. Because of these restrictions, they were unable to use this normative language in anything but a divisive way,

⁵⁶ CB. vol. 11, j. 268, p. 6574. Of course the anti-reform *Changbian* could not be more eager to report this criticism, especially if it is articulated by a former ally, but that does not necessarily mean that this report is wrong.

⁵⁷ Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. Volatile factions: p. 12-13; common language: p. 71, 75, 162-163; packing the bureaucracy with supporters, i.e. political factionalism: p. 161. Note how Levine here connects the common language to “unitary and ethical visions” shared by the quarreling coalitions.

⁵⁸ Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 70.

much less admit publicly to having formed political alliances themselves.⁵⁹ Far from arguing myself for the absolute autonomy of the actors from their historical and intellectual context, it seems to me that this is going too far in the other direction, once again edging towards a view of Chinese tradition as being an essentially unchangeable obstacle. Secondly, having to square his argument with the existing literature, which assumes said preexisting, structural divides, especially in terms of ideology, Levine is unable to resolve the tension between the volatility in political associations he acknowledges, and the permanent nature of relationships and opposition that is the underlying assumption of many accounts of the political events, including contemporary ones;⁶⁰ the common language he posits mainly has the negative effect of keeping the true nature of affairs, i.e. the chaos caused by the pervasive political and ideological divisions and discord of that period, from being discussed and recognized openly.⁶¹ Thus, the argument becomes another way of introducing a constant factor to volatile situations, rather than making the dynamic of these divisions visible and putting it to the foreground. Thirdly, and relatedly, Levine therefore implicitly accuses all the actors of employing this common language insincerely and hypocritically, when they denounced their opponents for the very same acts of political

⁵⁹ “The authors of the various ‘discourses on factions’ worked within a closed system of classical and historical allusions that constrained what positions they could publicly articulate and defend.” Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 44.

⁶⁰ Such as the account of Wang Anshi’s ascendancy, where in the beginning the fact that the emperor employed both Sima Guang and Wang Anshi supposedly cannot but be an attempt to promote intellectual diversity given their opposing views (Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 77, drawing on Xiao-bin Ji and others); there is a dialogue recorded for in which Zeng Gongliang makes the argument that there should be different opinions at court, to act as checks and balances (CB. vol. 9, j. 230, p. 5169), but I did not find a source that explicitly states that this was the emperor’s intention; in fact, the emperor here did not follow Zeng’s argument, consented to Wang Anshi’s claim that officialdom needed to be unified, and did not promote Sima Guang. Levine also writes that “a series of powerful grand councilors [...] attempted to pack the bureaucracy with their loyal supporters, [...]” (Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 161). In many ways this points to the problem, for in order to pack the bureaucracy with loyal supporters, it was first necessary to know who these are; it would seem, however, that quite a few officials that Wang Anshi promoted would fall out with him eventually, bringing us back to the volatile nature of factions that Levine fully acknowledges elsewhere (p. 12).

⁶¹ Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 162-163.

association and exclusion that they were engaging in themselves. Now, that can of course be a valid analysis, but it needs to be made more explicit as such, and explained in a different, historically more specific way than by ascribing a paramount, inescapable role to the traditional values and conventions of a court-centered elite society. In the following passages, a concrete example serves to highlight and elaborate on these criticisms, and at the same time move this introductory discussion in a different direction, a direction that will allow us to acknowledge and talk about the dynamic of social and intellectual change at the same time.

The social and normative “consequences” of ritual

In 1070, that is, after the political dispute about Wang Anshi’s New Policies had come to a first climax, Sima Guang opened a letter to Wang in the following way:

[...] Spring is pleasantly warm, and I very much hope that with all the important government business you have time to spare, and find yourself well. Confucius said: ‘There are three [kinds of] friends that are beneficial, and there are three [kinds of] friends that are harmful.’ [The original quote continues: ‘friends that are straightforward, forgiving, and knowledgeable are beneficial, friends that stoop to flattery, are fawning, and talk deceptively are harmful’.] I am without talent, and not worthy of the honor to consider you a friend, but it has been more than ten years since we have met and become acquainted, and [since we] frequently and for quite some time have been colleagues too, one also cannot say that we do not know each other at all. Although I would be too embarrassed [to claim to be] knowledgeable, when it comes to being straightforward and forgiving, I do not dare not to make an effort at that. On the other hand, with regard to flattery, fawning, and deceptive talk, I firmly decline to engage in these. Confucius [also] said: ‘good men (*junzi* 君子) are in sync with each other but not the same, lesser men (*xiaoren* 小人) are the same but not in sync with each other.’ For good men, [acceptable] ways [to act include both] taking and leaving [office], both speaking out and remaining silent, how can they be completely the same? But when it comes to their intentions, they all want to find their place [in society] to put the *dao* into practice, and to be of assistance in the current times to foster the people, this is the way in which they are the same. Previously, when I have discussed government matters with you, we frequently have been at loggerheads with each other, and it is unknown [if I have] your [understanding and] forgiveness for that or not. But for me, the admiration in my heart has not in the least been changed [by those disagreements]. I see that for more than thirty years it was you alone who have been burdened by having the most eminent reputation in the realm, that you are of great talent and your learning is plentiful, you are reluctant [to accept] promotions and are prone to withdraw [from government office at the first opportunity]. Literati near and far, acquainted with you or not, all have said that if you are not appointed [to an important government office] then all is lost, but if you are appointed to such office, then all-encompassing peace can be established and achieved, and the common people all will benefit from it. The emperor accepted this [advice] to promote you from among those who would not be promoted, and called on you to give counsel on important matters of government; was he not willing to hope for what the majority of people hoped for in you? Today you have been managing

government affairs for about a year, and the literati, regardless if they are at court or come from the provinces, all censure you unanimously. [...] ⁶²

Given what we know about these two Song literati, it appears rather surprising that Sima Guang here would stop only a little short of declaring his friendship to Wang Anshi, and even granted implicitly here and explicitly towards the end that his opponent was in fact a *junzi*, a ‘good man’, and that despite their differences they in principle shared common ethical intentions.

It is true that the leading figure of the anti-reform group then went on to take his opposite number to task for his bad policies, which were going to bring chaos to the world, and pointed out that he had surrounded himself with false friends. Yet, behind all his criticism Sima Guang in effect still assumed the pose of Wang Anshi’s true friend, going so far as to ostensibly defend him against the excessive slander he was being subjected to at this time: “Today, given the extent to which the people of the realm hate you, they will stop at nothing to make something up to defame [you with], and I alone [will] acknowledge that they are not right. You really are greatly virtuous, [instead] your fault lies in being far too determined and having too much self-confidence.” ⁶³ The last part turns this into a rather backhanded compliment, of course, and therefore Peter Bol is certainly not misrepresenting its intellectual content and basic thrust when he quotes this letter, and Wang Anshi’s reply, to illustrate the point that the two intellectual positions and political programs were in fact incompatible. ⁶⁴ Indeed, in the lengthy, and at times somewhat repetitive argument that Sima Guang offers, he leaves no doubt that he expects no less than the complete abolishment of the reform measures and institutions, and also demands the

⁶² 與王介甫書. QSW. vol. 56, j. 1211. p. 18-19.

⁶³ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1211, p. 19.

⁶⁴ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 128.

removal of those officials, Wang Anshi's current associates in the newly created offices, who just by being willing to discuss ways of generating profit (*li* 利) had shown that they were not 'good men'.⁶⁵ However, towards the end of the letter Sima Guang returned to the theme of both of them having a common goal, when he gave Wang the following assurance:

What I have said now is exactly the opposite of your intention, and I know full well that we do not agree on it, but although you and I [with regard to our particular] ideals and aspirations are different, [in terms of] the general goal [we pursue] we are the same. You merely wish to take office in order to implement your *dao*, and benefit the people of all under heaven; I merely wish to resign from office to follow my ideal, and [thereby] rescue the people of the realm, this is what the phrase '[good men] are in sync but not the same' means.⁶⁶

But given what he had said before it is undeniably "hard to believe that their ends could have been the same", as Peter Bol points out.⁶⁷ And indeed, Wang Anshi's reply also reflects the fact that there was no political or ideological common ground between them for a compromise, despite responding to Sima Guang's overtures to some extent as well:

Yesterday I received your elucidating message, and I humbly opine that, [although] for a long time I have been on amicable terms with you, the reason why we were not in agreement when discussing things lies in the fact that the approaches that we have adopted are very different. Although I feel the urge to go on and on about it, at the end of the day I will not receive your understanding and acceptance, therefore I will keep my reply to you short, and not once more explain myself in detail. Then again, I have received very kind treatment from you, and therefore in our exchange one should not be crude and rash, which is why I will lay out the reasoning for [my] *dao* here, hoping you might look at it with forgiveness. In general when Confucians argue, the problem lies in [different opinions on whether or not a given] designation [matches with] the facts 名實. When it has been clarified what designation [is appropriate] for the facts, the principles of all under heaven are at one's fingertips. [That is, all disagreements can be overcome].

Wang argued that, given that the two politicians could not even agree on how to designate and describe what was really going on, it was futile to go into such great detail as Sima Guang had; yet he then still continued to briefly reject one by one Sima Guang's negative assessment of his actions, policies, and the reaction of the "majority". The letter ends:

⁶⁵ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1211, p. 19.

⁶⁶ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1211, p. 23.

⁶⁷ Bol, "Government, Society, and State". p. 128.

If you were to blame me for having held my office for a long time, without having been able to help the emperor in implementing major activist policies, and in this way benefit this people of ours, then I would acknowledge my guilt. But when you say that today one ought to completely abstain from doing anything, and exclusively stick to what has been done before, then that is not something that I would acknowledge [as a failure of mine]. There is no reason for us to meet, I could not bear even the smallest memory of the old days coming [over me].⁶⁸

If we did not know it already from other sources, the last passage alone would show that this exchange of arguments and courtesies had no effect on political events whatsoever. In the process of the dispute over the Green Sprouts Loans, both sides had been much less courteous when making their arguments, to say the least.⁶⁹ For all intents and purposes, Wang Anshi had won the day when the emperor gave in and asked him to return to his duties, and accordingly there had been no lasting change in the reform agenda.⁷⁰ One solution to this dilemma would be to posit that Sima Guang did not ‘mean’ what he was saying, because it did not match what was happening otherwise, nor did it fit his beliefs that were so contrary to Wang Anshi’s; in many ways Peter Bol’s interpretation of this exchange points in this direction, when he draws on the letters’ expositions of the two intellectual positions to underline the point that there was no common ground, but finds Sima Guang’s assertion of common goals hard to believe. From this perspective, what we see here merely is ‘political rhetoric’, although the question remains what Wang Anshi would have to gain from replying at all, given his superior position at this point.

⁶⁸ 答司馬諫議書. QSW. vol. 64, j. 1389, p. 112-113.

⁶⁹ See *Changbian shibu*. vol. 1, j. 7, p. 300-317. The account frequently mentions how Wang Anshi reacted with anger to the numerous demands to change or abolish the law; without pointing to someone in particular, the other side was called ‘the lesser people’ (*xiaoren* 小人) by Wang Anshi (p. 313). When Wang declined to come to court, Sima Guang was ordered to pen a retort on behalf of the emperor to order him to return to his office, which angered Wang Anshi even more, and led to what amounted to an apology by the emperor (p. 305). This is also mentioned by Sima Guang in the letter. At the same time, Sima Guang connects his critique of the Green Sprouts to his refusal to accept the post of assistant commissioner for the military commission (p. 312).

⁷⁰ In the letter, Sima Guang himself recounted what had happened, and acknowledged that Wang Anshi at this point commanded the exclusive confidence of the emperor. QSW. vol. 56, j. 1211, p. 22-23.

However, the point here is not to deny that as a possibility, but to question if this is really all that this exchange of courtesies can tell us, however backhanded and incredible it may have been.⁷¹

For one thing, it is intriguing that Sima Guang would acknowledge that at an earlier point the literati had pinned their hopes on Wang Anshi's potential as leading official, that is, he does not talk of an opposing group that would have been pitted against Wang Anshi from the beginning;⁷² moreover, both opponents concede here that they previously had been on "amicable terms", despite their ideological differences; while this may be exaggerated and is admitted by Wang Anshi only to be qualified immediately, it seems very unlikely that it could be entirely fictional in this situation. Put differently, despite the fact that other sources actually do talk of a close relationship between the two prior to the reforms,⁷³ there is no need to go so far as to consider

⁷¹ Especially Wang Anshi's letter contains a few stabs, such as the expression "go on and on about it", which seems to be a reference to the length and the elaborate argument and quotations of Sima Guang's letter. QSW. vol. 64, j. 1389, p. 112.

⁷² That Sima Guang at the outset thought that people had high hopes for Wang Anshi is corroborated by a different source; on a completely different occasion, Sima Guang is said to have told Lü Hui that because of Wang Anshi's "literary accomplishments and learning, conduct and abilities" (*wen xue xing yi* 文學行藝), people were glad when the order came down to promote him; this source is made even more interesting by the fact that Sima Guang with these words supposedly wanted to delay or even prevent Lü Hui's first attack against Wang Anshi. Shao Bo 邵博, *Shao shi wenjian houlu* 邵氏聞見後錄. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983. j. 23, p. 177. Given that Wang did not have high office before, it had to be his writings and actions when on lower posts that made him famous, but it is also clear from this passage and the letter above that it was the hope for his political talents that Sima Guang was talking about.

⁷³ *Wenjian lu* claims that Wang Anshi, aside from forging bonds with the Hans and Lüs, also "attached himself to literati that were famous and [the most] virtuous in their times, such as Sima Guang and the likes, and was on friendly terms with them." (*Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 24-25). Wang Anshi's official biography also talks about the two having a close relationship, when relating the story of the letters above (SS. v. 30, j. 327, p. 10546). In a memorial in which he accuses himself of not having realized early enough how dangerous Wang was (discussed in detail in the conclusion at the end of Part II), Sima Guang also talks of a more limited relationship compared to others, and having been colleagues (QSW. vol. 55, j. 1208, p. 328-329). This memorial is in several collections, but *Wenjian houlu* claims that it had been received by the editor from the Sima family, but otherwise was not in the original *wenji* of Sima Guang; assuming that this kind of editing the record was more widespread, this would be an explanation why there is not more evidence for the earlier relationship between the two (*Wenjian houlu*. j. 23, p. 176). *Wenjian lu* also quotes Sima Guang as recalling an occasion when they both served as *qunmusi panguan* (Assistants in the Herds Office), and their superior, Bao Zheng, tried to force both of them to drink, but Wang Anshi

them friends or close political allies all of a sudden, but we will need to entertain the possibility of having to allow for a third option in between friendship and enmity to describe their relationship before *xining*. In this way, both Wang Anshi and Sima Guang for their relationship corroborate our earlier, more general claim that literati relationships had undergone a fundamental change at this point. What, then, was this earlier relationship between the two based on if it clearly could not be grounded in shared intellectual approaches?

It seems to me that the answer to this question can also be found in these letters, especially in the first one by Sima Guang, when he tried to re-invoke and recreate this earlier bond, which had helped them, if not to overcome their differences, then at least to not have them pose an obstacle to their social, “amicable” interaction. The way Sima Guang does so, in brief, is by acknowledging that Wang Anshi is a ‘good man’, *junzi*, who in fact had the well-being of the people in mind, however misguided the actual policies may be from Sima Guang’s perspective. In other words, the very same normative language that Levine interprets as the common but divisive factor in factional disputes is employed here in the exact opposite way, and in an exchange between the two most important opposing figures. It is true that one can find the exclusive, divisive usage of this language in the same letter, when Sima Guang derides Wang Anshi’s political associates as lesser men (*xiaoren*), who liked to talk about profit and should not be employed in government office.⁷⁴ Yet it remains a fact that Wang Anshi on this occasion is included in the group of ‘us’, the good men, with the goal to overcome rather than to create and

would not give in. This is portraying Wang in a negative light, as stubborn, but incidentally also corroborates that they had been colleagues at some point (*Wenjian lu*. j. 10, p. 108).

⁷⁴ See especially the third letter to Wang Anshi, but this theme comes up frequently in Sima Guang’s three missives (QSW. vol. 56, j. 1211, p. 26).

mark a difference between people, and in a situation at that where we know that the political and ideological divide could hardly have been greater. In other words, even at the height of the political struggle in *xining*, the actors were not the servants of their language, and instead exercised some autonomy how and where they used it in their exchanges, a finding that diminishes Levine's claim that this overarching common language could only be a divisive force. It is true that this connection proved to be fleeting, and exclusively limited to this exchange of courtesies, but should we therefore dismiss it entirely? Moreover, even if Sima Guang did not 'mean' what he said, and here merely recognized the need to mend fences, or followed social convention, does that make this attempt at reaching out to his opponent any less significant? Are we dismissing behavior of this kind too easily as mere convention and social ritual, given that it seemed to have worked earlier to overcome their differences, at least to some extent? Should we take such seemingly empty acts, which we will define as a kind of ritual, more seriously in our discussion of relationships and associations?

When Sima Guang calls Wang Anshi a *junzi* here, this in fact constitutes an almost perfect illustration of a pertinent definition of ritual and its potential "consequences", discussed at length by Seligman et al., whose diverse influence on my work I will lay out in the remainder of this introduction.⁷⁵ In their view, human rituals in all their different forms, and across different cultures, are subjunctive acts to overcome a fragmented world; in this case the social ritual consisted of acting 'as if' Sima Guang and Wang Anshi had something in common when they clearly had not. According to Seligman et al.'s argument, subjunctive empathy has an important

⁷⁵ Adam Seligman, Robert Weller, Michael Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and its Consequences. An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. For the main argument, see especially "Afterword", p. 179-182.

role in making any human community possible in the first place,⁷⁶ and in fact we see Sima Guang go to great lengths to act ‘as if’ he had put himself in Wang Anshi’s shoes, not just by granting that Wang was a ‘good man’ and reminding him about their good relationship, but also by quoting texts of the classical tradition that the latter supposedly preferred, if only to underline his own argument.⁷⁷ It is precisely the point of Seligman et al. that ritual acts of this kind work as such, and that the subjunctives that such acts create have real significance regardless of how much or how little bearing these have on ‘reality’, that is, on the larger world outside of the situation they were enacted in. For ritual to have consequences, it is also irrelevant whether these acts reflect the inner state of the participants or not, that is, whether the actors really mean what they are saying or doing. The advantage of this concept of ritual for our purposes, therefore, is that it allows us to talk about and recognize the significance of acts of social ritual as such, without being forced to take recourse to the separate question of whether or not it fit our coherent picture of the situation, or whether or not the actors ‘meant’ what they were saying. These are questions that we have seen more explicitly at work with Bol above, and in a different way and more implicitly with Levine, when he posits a disconnect between social reality and normative language.⁷⁸ We will make a more thorough argument for the usefulness of this definition of ritual as subjunctive below, but it suffices to point out here that an approach that incorporates and explains more of the evidence generally is preferable over one that restricts itself to being more selective in its use thereof.

⁷⁶ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. Ritual and the subjunctive: p. 21-28; empathy and subjunctive: p. 23-24, 70, 87.

⁷⁷ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1211, p. 21-22.

⁷⁸ Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 162-163.

According to the authors, ritual in this definition is an everyday occurrence, across different cultures and times, but in the texts given above we have an extreme example of how far this could go: while Wang Anshi in fact all but rejects the overtures of his opponent that they had shared goals, he still cannot help but respond to Sima Guang's 'kind treatment' with some – albeit toned-down – courtesy. It is therefore wrong to say that the ritual subjunctive fails completely here, because the pretence of courtesy that is constructed is to some degree mutual, and does within the confines of this exchange create some common ground, however limited and imagined, that allows the two to reiterate their arguments without that exchange being entirely dominated by mutual accusations and reproachful language. Wang Anshi is merely much less willing to play along with the subjunctive than Sima Guang, but playing along he still is. This becomes especially clear when contrasting Wang's response here to the anger and impatience that the sources describe as his reaction to such criticism otherwise.⁷⁹

On the other hand, despite being more courteous, the way that Sima Guang phrases his letter also leaves no doubt that he expects no less than the total subjection of his opponent to his demands, as Wang Anshi points out in his response. What we have said above therefore also remains true, namely that this subjunctive community was exclusively limited to these letters, and had no bearing on political events otherwise. Sima Guang quite predictably failed to convince Wang Anshi of his criticism, or to get him to sever the relationship with his associates. As Sima Guang had announced, Wang Anshi stayed in power to implement his ideas, and Sima Guang left office to make his protest public. At this point, their ideas therefore certainly were an important factor in their divide, but judging from these letters the problem in fact seems to be less that they were

⁷⁹ There are many examples of that, but see again the passage in *Changbian shibu*. vol. 1, j. 7, p. 300-317.

different, but that for both of them their respective ideas and beliefs had become paramount in defining their relationships and in making their political decisions. Again, according to their own admission this had not always been the case, in that they had been able to interact with each other earlier. However, at this point neither Sima Guang nor Wang Anshi were able or willing to revive their “amicable” relationship and extend their subjunctive community beyond this exchange. Under these circumstances, it seemed impossible for Wang Anshi even to meet Sima Guang, much less to strike a compromise and find common ground, echoing what we have argued above already, namely that both of them had adopted normative claims that overshadowed everything else. However, if one considers the different backgrounds and ideas of Wang Anshi and Sima Guang, it is rather remarkable that both of them would find it necessary and useful, in their own distinctive way, to make a similar claim that practical policies and politics are, or should be an intrinsic part of, as Bol has put it, the “normative form of the state” that they each favored.⁸⁰

Seen from this perspective, several related questions follow from the previous discussion: had there been a time when social ritual – letters such as these, and more generally also ritual forms such as Sima Guang calling Wang Anshi *junzi* – played a larger role in forming relationships, with an impact that could go beyond the immediate exchange, and be more long-term? And if so, what did the members of these associations have in common, and what divided them? Had social ritual at some point been more effective in overcoming differences of opinion? And finally, when did overstated normative claims like the ones offered by Wang Anshi and Sima Guang

⁸⁰ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 183. Note also how Bol discusses the very different notions of unity articulated by Wang Anshi and Sima Guang. p. 186.

become such an integral part of literati arguments? What was the effect of these claims on literati cohesion, and is there a way to explain how that worked, that is, how ideas could influence social relationships?

In this way, what began as a discussion of problems with scholarship on factionalism in *xining*, in fact leads us to a two political events in which Wang Anshi had no role at all, but which, as I argue, can nevertheless help explain the situation during his tenure, as well as his ultimate failure in reaching his normative goal of social unity: as we shall see in this dissertation, these questions point to a time 30 years prior to Wang Anshi's stint at the helm of government, namely the first effort at reform in the 11th century, taking place from 1043–1045 during the *qingli*-period. This reformatory project was conducted by a group of literati around Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052) and Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) that, on first glance, and judging by their two main texts, 'On Fundamentals' and 'Ten-Point Program', had already attempted to address much of the same problems and issues that Wang Anshi would tackle later. Even more pertinent to our purpose is the fact that the major source that will inform this study, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* by Li Tao, points to this group of people, and more specifically to one of the first clashes between the rivals Fan Zhongyan and Lü Yijian 呂夷簡 (979–1044) in 1036–7, as the point “when the talk of factionalism started.”⁸¹ In short, this is arguably the time when the overblown normative rhetoric entered the political arena, and was used by the actors to publicize and argue for their goals, and attack their opponents.

⁸¹ CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2784. This, and a subsequent, related dismissal to Lingnan is when the *Changbian* has the ‘talk’ of factionalism start. For the relevant comment, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2844.

On the other hand, however, it will also become apparent that within the core group that promoted the reforms, that is, Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi 韓琦 (1008–1075), Fu Bi 富弼 (1004–1082) and Ouyang Xiu, a remarkable cohesion existed, not only during the reforms and through their political defeat, but for a long time thereafter, and despite their having disagreements with each other. This finding stands in marked contrast to most *xining* and *yuanyou* associations, which would break during the respective main actors' hold on power. What is more, rather than sticking to clearly defined factions, prior, as well as during the *qingli* reforms these main actors also forged, broke, limited, and renewed diverse relationships with other figures, at times including opponents, a situation and process that we will try to map out in all its complexity in Part I. On top of that, we will see that the reforms that they proposed and implemented, despite their superficial similarity and ostentatious coherence, in fact did not make the same direct and totalizing connections between very specific practical reform measures and a coherent, unified normative system as Wang Anshi's program had done, and ultimately were much more limited and gradual in their approach. However, because the main target of these limited measures were examinations, recommendations, and promotions, they did affect the vital interests of literati families in a much more direct way than the economic reforms of Wang Anshi's times. In this first part we will thus establish a baseline of how successful associations could be forged and act politically in spite of differences of opinion, and in fact despite the overblown rhetoric, a success that here will be defined by the degree of coherence of these relationships, as well as the influence that the ideas of this group had on wider literati culture. At the same time, the normative rhetoric they employed during that period should not remain without consequences, and had a deep impact on political and literati culture in the course of the 11th century.

While we will discuss an instance of disagreement between two of the *qingli* reformers in the early 1050s in this introduction, it was only roughly ten years later, around 1064, that the final split occurred between the surviving core members of the *qingli* association, with Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi on one side, and Fu Bi on the other, almost coinciding with the first shot fired in the so called *puyi* 濮議, a fierce dispute about the ritual status of the – adopted – Emperor Yingzong’s biological parents. It is during this debate that the surviving, former *qingli* reformers, sans Fu Bi, and a new guard of young literati, which was inspired by the earlier *qingli* events and rhetoric, exchanged arguments about the way that norms should inform the selection of a ritual title for the emperor’s father, the Prince of Pu 濮王 (Zhao Yunrang 趙允讓 995–1059). During this clash, which will be the focus of Part II of this dissertation, it became apparent that both sides had very different ideas about how this decision should be made, and what the priorities should be. It is here that we finally see the full effect of the divisive common language, for despite an attempt by Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi to strike a compromise, the ensuing mutual accusations and political clash could only be resolved by the dismissal of several of the more radical actors, censors who had resorted to staying at home to force the emperor to heed their words. What makes this dispute so interesting and useful for our purposes is the fact that along with being an early example of the factional disputes that would dominate the remainder of the Northern Song, it also led the participants to lay open their concept of ritual, that is, what ritual should do and how one should decide what the ritual should be; in this way it allows us to map out a change of opinion about ritual among literati that will play a crucial role in our argument about how overblown normative ideas, not just about ritual, could influence social cohesion.

One advantage of the narrative of factionalism described above is that it provides a straightforward mechanism that makes it possible to link ideas and intellectual changes with social realities and politics. Therefore, when arguing that the concept of deeply ingrained factional structures hides the dynamic of historical events and change rather than adding to our understanding of it, it will be necessary to provide an alternative argument about how this mechanism worked, and how a certain *Weltbild* that placed importance on normative claims could have a profound influence on social relations and politics across groups with different interests, ideas, and backgrounds.

Above, we have already introduced a plea for the significance of ritual made by Seligman et al., but in fact this is only one side of their larger argument. Drawing on views of ritual coined by diverse thinkers, across time and cultures, including the Chinese tradition, they not only claim that their – subjunctive – reading of ritual has been present across different cultures and times of human history, but that the virtual abandonment of this reading that is apparent in more recent, modern interpretations of ritual has had far-reaching consequences. This does not mean that ritual has in fact disappeared from our world, instead, we are seriously inhibited by our inability to see it as anything other than an accessory, either insignificant as such, or merely an outgrowth of a larger, more coherent and important entity. This failure to take ritual seriously on its own terms not only affects how we conceive of our world and our relationships to other human beings, but also limits the strategies we can talk about and employ to overcome the difficulties that are the inevitable consequence of the fragmented, multi-faceted world and society we live in.⁸² In

⁸² While they also do speak of balancing the two, this seems to be the gist of Seligman et al.'s argument and conclusion. Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. Balancing the two: p. 104, 181; the normative demand of taking ritual seriously: p. 10-11, 179-182.

this way, Seligman et al. in fact first and foremost offer a thorough critique of the concept of modernity as a whole, as well as the phenomenon of religious and political extremism that are such a prevalent feature of it.⁸³

In other words, their analysis and argument is chiefly about ‘us’, and yet, what makes us modern in their view, namely a prevalence of intellectual tendencies and normative claims that advocate a return to wholeness and unity and a renewed connection between outer state and inner self (“authenticity”), as such is not actually a phenomenon exclusive to modernity. Instead these modes of thought, which they call “sincere” modes, have been an equally relevant and important part of human existence as ritual, and modernity is thus reduced by them to the relative question of the extreme degree to which these modes are consciously emphasized in our times.⁸⁴ In this way, the authors question whether there are any firm and absolute boundaries between modern and pre-modern human experience, between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and, as a consequence ultimately between object and observer in general.⁸⁵ Therefore, taking their argument seriously is a question not only of what they argue, but also of how they do so, and entails the acceptance of the duality of ritual and sincerity that is at the core of their argument as one valid way of talking about human experience. An important point to understand is that they use it as a duality, and not a dichotomy, that is, that this way of making these phenomena visible and discursive leaves the ambiguities in place, in fact painfully so; its two parts will never amount to one unambiguous,

⁸³ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 9-10, 161-162, 181. See also the connection that the authors make between sincerity and reform movements: p. 131-132. They see, however, also reform movements motivated by ritual: p. 134-135.

⁸⁴ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 104-130.

⁸⁵ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 86-87. See also the critique of what they call the opposition posited between “the West and the rest”. p. 10.

coherent whole, as the definition of dichotomy would suggest. An early reader of this work has pointed out that this kind of duality, much like the better known ‘Eastern’ metaphysical concept of *yin* and *yang*, is a totality of sorts itself, and at the same time not precise enough to be of much value in academic discourse. Now, *yin* and *yang* can certainly be a totality if employed and interpreted as a dichotomy describing a unified, coherent world, but that is only one possible use and explanation, and not the most common one. The other reading would be that dualities such as *yin* and *yang*, or ritual and sincerity, have been and can be put to good use in cases where the diverse phenomena of a complicated and fragmented world, cognitive, metaphysical, philosophical, or social, cannot find an adequate expression otherwise, due to the limitations of human language, imagination, and existence. In other words, in its dialectic the duality of ‘both x and y’ preserves more of the valuable information, expresses more of the relevant ambiguity than a straightforward definition along the lines of ‘either x or y’ would be able to, and as such, rather than being unscientific and imprecise, allows one to be more thorough in expressing and acknowledging a complex situation.⁸⁶ This has far reaching consequences for this study, and on many different levels, not the least for the heuristic approach used, and the style of the argument offered here; it means that the reader will be challenged at every step to accept the ambiguities of the sources, biographies, and ideas as much as possible considering the demands of a still-intelligible argument. Therefore at many points no easy way out is offered, by way of a straightforward, absolute definition that under the guise of objectivity in most cases serves to hide certain a priori assumptions and decisions already made by the scholar, namely that there *is* a system, a totality that can be absolutely defined in the first place, be it in the social, the political

⁸⁶ This is a rephrasing of the argument explicitly and implicitly made in several parts of the book, but particularly the following: Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 44-47, 87, 113-114.

or the ideological realm, or that such an assumption is preferable academically. On the other hand, however, I argue that the advantages of this approach will far outweigh this cost, in that one of the problems of the earlier literature was precisely the overarching need to make distinctions between social and ideological groups as clear and unambiguous as possible, which relegated the prevalent evidence of disunion within associations to the status of being an exception or a side note, and thus hid the ambiguities and commonalities that provide the dynamic of the situation.

The remainder of this introduction aims at providing full justification for this approach at the different levels for which it is required, while also spelling out more of the underlying assumptions and implications. Firstly, the duality of ritual and sincerity, discussed as such by Seligman et al., serves as a substitute to the explanation of associations and factional clashes as solely based on deep-rooted ideological or socio-economic divides, which has been found inadequate in this introduction; using dualities such as ritual and sincerity, but also painstakingly refraining from defining absolute groups of ‘enemies’ or ‘friends’ allows us to talk about the existence of diverse social and intellectual relationships in all their ambiguity, without dissolving them into permanent, unambiguous networks of social connections, political allies, or believers in one coherent ideology. To use a phrase coined by Bruno Latour, this allows us to “reassemble the social” from a perspective of ideas, but in a way that considers both the social and ideas as dynamic, and not inert factors.⁸⁷ To give an example, from the perspective of such coherent,

⁸⁷ To reassemble the social without recourse to permanent, hidden forces such as ‘the Social’ is, in a nutshell, what Bruno Latour argues for in his exposition of Actor-Network-Theory. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. There is a considerable overlap between the approach taken here and Latour’s ideas about a new sociology, but Seligman et al. is more useful for our purposes, since they argue from a pre-modern, idea-centered perspective that lends itself better to the

absolute networks, the exchange between Wang Anshi and Sima Guang discussed above is rather difficult to account for in its entirety; therefore for a proponent of this view there is not much else to do than concentrate on the ideological content – the meaning – of the letters, and discount or minimize the ritual forms which seem to run counter to their exclusive ideologies, including the surprising fact that Sima Guang would call Wang Anshi a “good man” with similar goals. The duality of sincerity and ritual then leaves both sides in place as useful evidence for our understanding of their complex relationship, without having to delegitimize and discount the ritual as meaningless or ‘insincere’ because it fails to fit the expectation. We can accept that Wang Anshi and Sima Guang here ‘really’ have entered a relationship, however fleeting and brief, based on those ritual forms, as well as on the memory of whatever bond that they had shared earlier, and despite the fact that this may have been in contradiction to what they believed, and in fact said elsewhere, at the time.

At the same time, accepting these ambiguities as they are does not amount to relinquishing our ability to analyze and assess. Seligman et al.’s critical discussion of modernity’s extreme emphasis of the ‘sincere mode’ provides a way to understand the ascendancy, prevalence, and effect of the overblown normative claims that have been in the focus of our analysis of the

comparison; Latour is mainly concerned with making sociology relevant again to us, now, rather than with ‘them’, in the past. Suffice it here to point to significant commonalities between the two approaches, namely that both ascribe more significance to the acts of forming and keeping a relationship, rather than to the permanent, absolute relationship that supposedly is a consequence of these acts, but which must remain hidden because we cannot actually see it other than through these acts (p. 34-36). Moreover, Latour also maintains that “actors and scholars” can, and in fact should be conceived of as being in the same boat, and thus breaks down the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (p. 32-34), the object and the outside observer; in his view the supposedly disinterested gaze (p. 33) makes the result less scientific, precisely because of the artificial permanency that it introduces to relationships that supposedly only the scholar can assess adequately. In other words, the decision what is or is not relevant, or from our perspective, whether or not the actor ‘meant it’, should not be made a priori, and rest exclusively with the scholar, merely treating the ‘other’ as an informant. Finally, and most interestingly, Latour also claims that “we have never been modern” (p. 41n37).

failure of Wang Anshi's program. In Seligman et al.'s view, to exclusively conceive of the world in, and subject the world to notions of universal structures, absolute truths, and totalities runs into severe problems when confronted with an inherently fragmented world and a multi-faceted social reality that will never fit the ideal in the desired way. Attempts to force the primacy of sincerity onto an ambiguous world have resulted and will result in personal hypocrisy and social destruction.⁸⁸ Again, their critique of intellectual trends that do that specifically targets Western modernity; contrary to most arguments made before, Seligman et al. argue that the historical ills of the last century are a result not of too little, but of too much emphasis on sincerity and authenticity, and too little recognition of the value of ritual. However, most important for our purposes, the increasing prominence of extreme religious and radical political movements in our times is interpreted as a consequence and outgrowth of these larger tendencies;⁸⁹ in short, Seligman et al. offer a general definition and explanation of political radicalism and reform endeavors that is relevant to our case of radical normative claims in the 11th century.

We have argued that ritual is by no means absent and without significance in the letters that Sima Guang and Wang Anshi sent to each other, reflecting the assumption that ritual is never entirely absent from human experience, but it is also true, again, that it had no effect outside of this exchange of letters, and remains overshadowed by the exposition of mutually exclusive ideas on how one should act in this political situation; in other words, ritual had become a means to an overarching normative end, to prepare the limited common ground in order to be able to once more express their differences and convince the other side of their ideas; in the view of both men

⁸⁸ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 108, 110, 113, 128.

⁸⁹ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 10-11, 131-132, 181.

this dispute could only be solved by one of them accepting the position of the other wholesale, amounting to no less than a complete change in his inner state. However, in a situation where this fact is made so unequivocally clear by both of them, the mitigating potential of social ritual must remain very limited. While still reciprocating some of Sima Guang's language of social conventions, Wang Anshi in particular makes bluntly clear that he places not much stock in them; given that their dispute had a concrete reason in their different intellectual approaches and conflicting definitions of reality it was pointless to call each other *junzi*; meeting each other would also be impossible, since Wang Anshi could not bear the thought of times past. Note that Sima Guang, probably following a convention, had still expressed his regret about not being able to explain himself in person. Especially the last remark by Wang Anshi therefore reflects an important point in Seligman et al.'s argument about the divisive effects of too much 'sincerity', that is, of placing too much emphasis on the inner self, on how one 'feels'; in other words, rather than being a sign for insincerity when engaging with Sima Guang in this way, Wang Anshi is too sincere for this social ritual to have further consequences, since on account of his inner state he must decline even the most limited personal interaction beyond this exchange.

To reiterate, at the heart of the argument proposed by Seligman et al. lies the assumption that both ritual and sincere modes are a human universal, and as such calls for increased sincerity per se are not a unique feature of the Western, modern experience; instead, the difference is the prevalence of these calls in the here and now. The other human universal found across cultures – ritual – in this assumption at the same time blurs, defines, and questions boundaries, and in this way allows the practitioner to create a temporary world within his or her fragmented existence, a subjunctive 'as if' through everyday ritual acts that function on a different plane, and detached

from inner states, conscious seeking of truths, or the immediate materiality of the ritual implements; accordingly, we will see that some actors and thinkers of the 11th century conceived of ritual in very similar terms as Seligman et al. Because Seligman et al. themselves question boundaries as such in the way they set up their argument, what they say applies both to ‘us’, as moderns and as observers of the 11th century, as well as to the 11th century; as seen above, the reader of their work is challenged to acknowledge at least to some extent their point that this is a fragmented world, by accepting the value of dualities; at the same time their argument about these human universals makes predictions possible about how ‘they’, the thinkers, and political and social actors of the 11th century saw their world, and how they made decisions on how to act in it, based on how they conceived of the relationship between ritual and sincerity. When we say that someone valued ritual as a separate entity in this sense, this is not to mean that the same thinker could not at the same time value and theorize about sincerity, but we will see that in order to take ritual seriously on its own terms, literati of the 11th century also had to acknowledge at least to a certain degree that their world was fragmented and complex, and would fundamentally remain so despite their efforts at reforming and improving things; an important way to express this ambiguity and fragmentation was the heuristic device of dualities discussed above, and accordingly we will notice a tendency among Song thinkers who took ritual seriously to in some way or other use dualities to express the fragmented and diverse factors that should inform a ritual decision; again, these are not dichotomous pairs of forces that would add up to one permanent, harmonizing truth about the real world. In fact, one of the decisive differences between the two positions in the *puyi* ritual debate was the question of whether or not it was possible to assume and reconcile a duality of contradictory normative demands in the decision on the correct ritual form in this situation; the remaining *qingli* reformers claimed that

their balanced suggestion could meet both demands at the same time, while their opponents rejected this duality of norms in favor of one of its constituents, which they declared the pertinent principle that would once and for all solve the problem at hand. From this perspective, the criticism of the early reader of this work that a duality as such is too vague and ambiguous to be of use in historical discussion, far from being merely an objective observation, in fact amounts to taking a side in the debate of the time; again, we see that the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’, object and observer, are challenged by this framework.

The theory and practice of ritual and sincerity, and its connection to *wen* and *dao*

In the following paragraphs we will draw on some translated texts from different eras to continue this exposition of the intellectual framework for this study, as well as its implications. This serves to highlight that with the reading of ritual as subjunctive ‘as if’ we are not in fact bringing an alien, invented concept to the study of China; instead Seligman et al. show that this vision of ritual is present in diverse human traditions, including the Chinese one; as a matter of fact, their discussion allows us to overcome our own preconceptions of what ritual and relationships should or should not be, and see something in the record for the 11th century that was there all along. For this reason it is necessary to discuss how indigenous and contemporary texts reflect these ideas, and how ritual and sincerity square with other concepts that have received more attention by scholars, especially the *guwen* discussion about *wen* 文 and *dao* 道 – literary form and normative content. Since Seligman et al. draw heavily on the Analects to make their point, the following quote from that classical text may serve as a first example for the acknowledgement of

the value of ritual in the attempt at reconciliation with the demands of a fragmented world; in fact, in a slight deviation from the interpretation of the Analects offered by Seligman, et al.,⁹⁰ it will be argued here that at least in this passage the Confucius of the Analects comes as close as possible to taking both seriously on their own terms, by offering his unique vision of sincerity that at the same time embraces and accepts the ambiguity and tragedy of a fragmented world that first and foremost warrants a ritual response:

Zai Wo asked about the three year mourning period, saying: ‘Surely one year is long enough. If the gentleman (*junzi*) refrains from practicing ritual for three years, the rites must fall into ruin; if he refrains from music for three years, this must be disastrous for music. After the lapse of a year the old grain has been used up, while the new grain has ripened, and the four different types of tinder have all been drilled in order to rekindle the fire. One year of mourning will do.’

The Master asked: ‘Would you be at ease then eating your sweet rice and wearing your brocade gowns?’ ‘I would’ The master replied, ‘Well, if you are at ease doing so, then by all means you should do it. When the gentleman is in mourning, he gets no pleasure from eating sweet foods, finds no joy in listening to music, and is not comfortable in his place of dwelling. This is why he gives up these things. But if you would be at ease doing them, then by all means you should’.

After Zai Wo left, the Master remarked, ‘This shows how lacking in *ren* 仁 this Zai Wo is! It is only three years after its birth that a child can do without the intensive care of its parents – this is why the three year mourning period is the common practice throughout the world. Did Zai Wo not receive three years of care from his parents?’⁹¹

This passage is remarkable for three reasons: firstly, it places the practitioner of ritual into the context of a fragmented world that confronts him with contradictory and conflicting norms, needs, and interests: there are prescribed activities (ritual and music) unconnected to the mourning for the parents that are impeded by prolonged mourning. There are activities connected to everyday material needs that are, if not impeded by, then at least out of sync with mourning,

⁹⁰ They draw on Confucianism to showcase a ritual mode of thought. Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 35-36.

⁹¹ Analects 論語, 17.21 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>) (henceforth: *Scripta Sinica*). 重榮宋本論語注疏附校勘記. p. 157-2 –158-1. Slightly modified from translation by Philip J. Ivanhoe, Bryan W. Van Norden (eds.), *Readings in classical Chinese philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2005. p. 50-51. I disregarded questions of textual tradition that one could bring to this text.

not to mention the basic human desire for pleasure and comfort. Finally, there is the debt to one's parents, which has been accrued during their care for the infant child.

Secondly, the Confucius of the text insists that three years of mourning are an accepted and important social norm to be universally followed, and informed by a basic constant of human life, the duration of infancy and therefore intensive care by the parents. After showing earlier that Zai Wo is not part of the group of advanced practitioners that he calls gentlemen, or 'good men' (*junzi*), when talking to others he still insists that Zai Wo by rights should adhere to and not question this prescription even if at this point he would be at ease doing the things he is not supposed to do during mourning. The text has Confucius claim that it is a social norm that fulfills an important individual and social function by ameliorating the natural imbalance between the enormous effort parents are expending for their child and the inability of this child to make good on this debt to them. Since the mourning period arguably does not in fact benefit the parents directly, at least in a predominantly this-worldly thought-model such as the one that the Analects construct, this kind of activity is what in our framework would be called a ritual; that is, a subjunctive that in the form of a ritual, repeated activity, acts 'as if' an imbalance or break were bridged either between actors, or between actors and their environment; in this way it fulfills the function of ameliorating a divide that in a fragmented world is impossible to overcome otherwise. The fact that Zai Wo fails to see the importance of this ritual is an indicator for his utter failure in *ren*, sometimes translated as humaneness, and it seems that this is one of the passages where the social, interpersonal component of its meaning deserves to be highlighted. Seligman et al. add to that that *ren*, rather than being a sincerity mode, is the ability to know the right thing to do in a

situation with conflicting demands, ritual or otherwise.⁹² It is, so to speak, no excuse that Zai Wo has not yet reached the state of a *junzi* who is at ease performing the appropriate ritual in a case as important as this, and he should be able to realize this without having been told, just from what he sees in the world, from what he knows about human society, and from his successful practice of more mundane, unproblematic ritual. On the contrary, a human being who merely acts according to its inner states will not be *ren*, and thus unable to be a meaningful part of this society.

And yet, when questioning Zai Wo, the Confucius of the Analects implicitly introduces the prospect for everybody that this is not just a social norm that must be eternally followed in the face of personal desires and conflicting rituals, but that practicing ritual has the potential to at some point lead to a state, however temporary and situational, in which the practitioner is at ease doing it, a state that seems to come as close as one can get to leaving the subjunctive of the ritual behind for a moment. To be sure, the Analects, as in other places, accomplish this in a carefully crafted move that sets up a plethora of caveats and checks to the human desire for sincerity and totality, by denying both Zai Wo and the reader a direct and easy answer to their questions, and by locating the main difference between Zai Wo and the *junzi* in the realm of the senses, of immediate negative reactions to things that he should not do, rather than that of conscious thought, universal knowledge, or unified inner states that might tempt us away from accepting the fragmented nature of the world. But it seems to me that for all its embracing of an ambiguous, unknowable reality, and in all its exhortations that inner states cannot be trusted, and that the

⁹² Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 35.

work of ritual must never stop,⁹³ the Analects in the relief of this and other carefully worded passages still offer the hope for a brief moment when outer and inner state are in congruence, or in other words, a moment of sincerity, which however has to be worked for time and again by accepting ritual in all its ‘consequences’. This prospect, however small, is the necessary motivation for the practitioner that enables him to go the ‘Way’. Note also how the wording, the very form of the language used, embodies the message without being dominated by it.

Thus, ritual and sincerity are connected in a way, but very much remain separate entities; in a fragmented world and in the face of imperfect actors, ritual according to the Analects contains value in and of itself, and constitutes an entity that exists as an independent form, and in this case is even more important than individual sincerity. This excursion served to explain the basic premise, to show in a general way that the two principles as an undercurrent are present in Chinese thought since early times, and to give an example of how both ritual and sincere modes, implicitly or explicitly, can be present side by side in the ideas of one thinker, or even in the same passage. At the same time the text also promotes a specific way of coming to decisions about ritual, or more generally of determining how to act in a given situation; rather than trusting the inner self, what one is told, or one universal principle, it is multiple factors that must inform any such decision in a given situation, and at different stages in the development towards sagehood. Despite the issues with dating the different texts, it would be possible and meaningful not just to compare how different thinkers conceive of this problem and tension, but also to

⁹³ The difference to Seligman et al. is not substantial, for they do talk of temporary “pockets of order” that are created (*Ritual and its Consequences*, p. 42), of “something akin to what a sincerity framework would valorize as autonomy” (p. 36), I just think that at the end of the day this is still a result, however ‘ritual’ and qualified, of the ‘sincere’ human quest for knowledge/*Erkenntnis*.

connect their unique handling of the issue to the historical context they lived in, as far as we can know about that. For example, the Analect's brilliantly ambiguous position on sincerity and emphasis on ritual could be connected in a meaningful way to the chaotic, fragmented circumstances of the late Spring and Autumn/Early Warring States, both in ethical and institutional terms, which made solutions seem unrealistic and dangerous that were centered on universal truths, the inner self, or on government institutions. The intellectual developments and deviations of the Mengzi and Xunzi in turn could be linked to their times, in which such solutions seemed more plausible, either due to the changed historical circumstances, or because other schools of thought had made an argument in that direction. This rather superficial observation is just to demonstrate that thinking in and applying dualities such as ritual and sincerity need not be done in an ahistorical way, and indeed is not just relevant to understand the *Problematik* of a given intellectual tradition.⁹⁴

While this tension can be discussed in the intellectual sphere, questions of how to fulfill and reconcile these contradicting needs and norms could have very practical implications for the decisions to be made as an elite family, as the passage below shows, which at the same time gives evidence that the difficult relationship between ritual and sincerity was discussed over the course of the 11th century. In the following commemorative text the early Song *guwen* scholar Mu Xiu 穆修 (979–1032), discusses in response to a friend's request the precedents of ancestral halls since antiquity and the merits of his friend's arrangement:

⁹⁴ Benjamin Schwartz discusses the relevance of several different polarities for the Confucian tradition, but in a way that deliberately leaves out the historical context or developments. Benjamin Schwartz, "Some Polarities in Confucian Thought," in: David Nivison, Arthur Wright (eds.), *Confucianism in Action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: p. 50-62. p. 51.

As to the new hall that before long was erected to administer the order of precedence among them (the ancestors), he built three rooms and set up five positions (for the likenesses of the ancestors) in them. On all sides there were eaves to provide cover and support, which were embellished with red, carved ornaments. [...] One day he eyed this building⁹⁵ and said: How can I be without the means to extend my filial love to my late parents and late elder brother? Therefore I use this [building] to hang up likenesses, and sacrifice according to the seasons and festivals. But if this is not recorded, how can I let my descendants know about this? I request that you [do that], linking this [practice] to the wider classical tradition (*zhuzi* 諸子).⁹⁶

Shamed by the demand of my elder brother I did not dare to decline, therefore I said. ‘The design of this building, is that not almost the same as the ancestral temple (*jiamiao* 家廟)? As to [the matter] of the ancestral temple, since the people of the Tang Dynasty renewed and revalued the old rites, this form has been reestablished, if coarsely so. For that time it is first recorded that noble families practiced it unauthorized. The charismatic power of the Tang went by, and what had come back once again was abandoned during the rise of the military men during the Five Dynasties. From this onwards, among the families of generals and chancellors, military and civil officials there was no one who again would talk about this. When it increasingly became the fashion to build large estates, they first worried about them not being sublime and extensive enough, and in the end did not worry about the building of the hall for their ancestors not being erected.

The good men (*junzi*) of antiquity did not dare to relate to the deities in a disrespectful manner, therefore they stipulated implements and clothes and erected royal ancestral temples in order to sacrifice to their ancestors, indicating sincerity (*cheng*) and purity. The people today all use everyday implements and clothes, and moreover use them to sacrifice in the common rooms of the house. It must be that they do not thoroughly understand the way of serving the spirits, thereby causing the sacrifices of the literary elite and gentlemen for a long time to be virtually indistinguishable from the sacrifices of the common people. Suppose there was one family that went against the current of the era and the practices of the famous; that obeyed the ritual and paid attention to ethical teachings; that deeply mastered [it] and longed for it. This family is which one? It is the house of Duke Kangyi (his friend)!

[...Here Mu Xiu describes the arrangement in the ancestral hall of his acquaintance in detail...]

[Behold] its veneration of parents, and order of seniority in the family; the sparkling and bright likenesses of the deceased, dignified and imposing as in life. The clansmen take it as something to look [up] to, for the sense [of family] it serves as something to rally around, the multitude of sacrifices have a [proper] place and are not scattered [all over]. Their reverence thus is serious, their spirits thus are entertained; it is the perfection of filial piety. The *Liji* states: ‘When he has the necessary means, and there is a fitting ritual, but the time is not suitable, the good man (*junzi*) does not perform it.’⁹⁷ The procedure of the temple sacrifices has not been performed for a long time, seeking the correct way to perform them, it is necessary to heed the times and make concessions; what is curbed at the moment, will not be freed by ritual alone, therefore the name ‘ancestral temple’ by rights [only] exists having been wrongly appropriated, and certainly its positions of precedence of the family spirits are arranged without proper justification. Therefore one does not dare to completely promote [the ancestors] to the spirit ranks of ‘deceased father’ and ‘paternal grandfather’, but the seasonal sacrifices are done according to the proper arrangement, and from now on there is constancy. Moreover, as for the private ancestral temples of the previous eras, they all were set up in the capital; today, for this [building, one] did not adopt the name ‘ancestral temple’, [instead] re-erected it in the place of residence, daring to request the name ‘hall for family sacrifice’, *jiacitang* 家祠堂, confident that this fits

⁹⁵ Note that I translate *yu* 宇 here *pars pro toto* as “building”, as opposed to “eaves” earlier.

⁹⁶ While *zhuzi* ordinarily refers to the various thinkers of the pre-Qin era, the ritual context makes me think that it is the various Confucian thinkers and classical works that he refers to here, therefore I translated it as “wider classical tradition”. This reflects the fact that the ‘Confucian Classics’ may not yet have assumed the singular position at this point that they later had, but certainly were included in Mu Xiu’s considerations.

⁹⁷ *Liji* 禮記 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重校宋本禮記注疏附校勘記. 檀弓上第三. j. 8, p.147-1. However, the word order and some characters are different there: 有其禮, 有其財, 無其時, 君子弗行也.

the core of the matter and is true to what is right and proper in the current times. Alas, as to the ancestral temple, how can one not [want to] recreate it (in the appropriate way), if it were recreated, then all would be fine; but as long as it has not been recreated, then it is this hall that approaches the ‘Way’ of sacrificing the ancestors and that deserves to become the ritual of the time.⁹⁸

The intellectual predicament discussed here is the following: in antiquity, important cultural forms such as ancestral rituals and the proper setting for them were stipulated in a way that led to sincerity and purity of expression and, in contrast to today, showed an understanding for the ‘Way’ of sacrificing to the ancestors. After an imperfect recovery under the Tang, rituals were even more in ruin at present, and the question was how to re-‘form’ these rituals in the face of times that had changed and a society that was not the same as in antiquity. On the one hand Mu Xiu criticized the customs of today, where in many cases neither special clothing nor a special venue was used to perform these important rituals, making the rituals of the intellectual and social elite indistinguishable from those of the commoners. An endeavor as important as this needed a proper form; yet it was equally obvious that it was impossible just to return to the ritual stipulations and names of antiquity, due to the fundamental changes that had taken place and required adjustment. Therefore it would not do to simply call the hall ‘ancestral temple’ as had been attempted earlier, this would not lead to the same sincerity that was the hallmark of antiquity. Despite the desirability of returning to the proper ancient forms, ritual by itself was unable to rectify an imperfect world; misappropriated as in the Tang, it may even be connected to the decline of the dynasty.⁹⁹ Instead, a negotiation has taken place that leads to an adequate connection between different demands, and reconciles the conflicting needs and norms;

⁹⁸ 任氏家祠堂記. QSW. vol. 16, j. 323, p. 35-36.

⁹⁹ See Patricia Ebrey for an overview and discussion of texts about family shrines/ancestral temples that make similar arguments, as well as the contemporary debate about this topic, including attempts at regulating their construction. Patricia Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China: A Social History of Writing about Rites*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991. p. 53-56.

implicitly, by juxtaposing these needs, a way of deciding these matters was suggested as well, so that the ritual once again corresponded to what is right and proper under the current, less-than-perfect circumstances, without one demand taking undue precedence over the other. Mu approves of the arrangements of his acquaintance and the new name for the building; he declares these to be the best way to overcome the conflicting demands that ritual renewal faces, by reflecting both the changes of the times and what is at the heart of this particular ritual, without misappropriating anything. The author here is of course edging much closer to overt claims of truth and sincerity than Confucius was in the *Analects*, firstly by assuming that there indeed had existed an unambiguous, ideal form in the past; secondly, by expressing the hope of returning to that eventually. Thus, the prospect of a universal solution is put on the table, a return to how it was in antiquity, in the course of which the ritual form of the ancestral temple would experience its proper renaissance. This is why, as we will see, the early *guwen* 古文 movement very much laid the ground for these claims of universal truths to become predominant later on. And yet, Mu Xiu for the present times still recognizes the ambiguity of human historic existence when he asserts that, short of this general renaissance, the ritual needs of the current elite must be met by negotiating between conflicting demands, and resisting the desire to take the seemingly easy and straightforward, but treacherous road of directly copying ancient ritual forms. By acknowledging the problem that at this point a return to the ideal order was impossible, Mu still fulfilled the demand made above that makes it possible to take ritual seriously, namely that the fragmented nature of his current world be accepted as such. At least for the moment, ritual form had to be re-created and performed without overly universal guidelines of right or wrong, in a way that best fit the current situation. At the same time, Mu Xiu also showed his awareness of the very

practical significance of working ritual in a family or clan, as a way to foster social cohesion among members and give them something to rally around.

This passage also provides an opportunity to spell out and lay open what the reader may have deduced already from our general discussion of loose boundaries and ambiguous definitions above, for this ambiguity applies to the terms, the very language used here as well: the intellectual framework of ritual and sincerity for the purpose of this study will be larger than a narrow definition of these terms suggests, to encompass subjunctive acts that would not necessarily be considered ritual by narrow, ‘modern’ standards, not least because it is precisely these ideas about ritual that Seligman et al. find inadequate for both the East and the West. Since they also draw on classical texts of Confucianism, and in general dispute that firm, culturally specific definitions are relevant for their purposes, the Chinese term *li* 禮, in a reading like that of the Analects is in fact closer to what Seligman et al. mean than the common associations that the corresponding English term evokes. Likewise, the main argument of this dissertation is that during the 11th century, a general change took place in how important thinkers envisioned *li*, from a reading such as the one offered by Mu Xiu in this text, or by the Analects, to one that was much more comparable to the aforementioned English, ‘modern’ meaning of the word ‘ritual’ that Seligman et al. criticize. It is of course possible to define these terms, ritual and *li*, in a more culturally specific way against each other, and this may be perfectly useful and valid for other purposes. However, if we were to do so here, the only consequence of highlighting the differences between cultures and their words, or the ritual of Seligman et al. and the *li* of the 11th century, would be to increase confusion, by depriving us of the language to express what we argue for, namely that ‘here’, in the development towards the modern West, and ‘there’, in the

11th century, a comparable development has taken place; in both cases this shift was from one interpretation of ritual/*li* that considered it as an entity with separate significance in a fragmented world, to another interpretation of ritual/*li* that completely collapsed it into something larger, more important, and more coherent that ultimately served to un-fragment the world. By the same token, visions of how to be sincere/*cheng* 誠 changed as well at these times. However, all of the actors in the 11th century as a matter of course spoke of *li*, and as a rule we will for the most part continue to speak of ritual, while keeping in mind that the difference and change we talk about concerns how the concepts that these words stood for were envisioned, not the words themselves.

Likewise, this discussion will also not limit itself a priori to texts that expressly use both the Chinese terms *li* 禮 and *cheng* 誠, although these at times can be found side by side in the relevant sources. Despite the fact that the passage from Mu Xiu's text at one point actually uses the word *cheng*, namely when it describes how it had worked in antiquity, it is quite obvious that it is a larger question that is at stake here, a wider scope that is expressed in words like *yi* 義 and *dao* 道 (in the latter case, however, it is used in more narrow senses such as "the Way to serve the ancestors") that appear as entities opposite *li*. In other words, ritual here needs to be brought in line and reconciled with a larger, and more diverse idea of what is right and proper in a given time and for a given situation. This of course is not to say that terminology is not important, or that all these terms can be used interchangeably, but that they in this case form part of a larger intellectual question that will guide this study. As already mentioned above, we will see that it is precisely when only one normative term is connected to ritual/*li* in an absolute way that the shift has occurred, from one interpretation of ritual to the other.

Mu Xiu's explanations also show that ritual encompasses not just the actual ritual action, but also the form and arrangement of the building, and most importantly for this text, its name; which brings us into the realm of language, literary form and cultural patterns, or *wen* 文, that needs to become part of our scope. In the form *wen* and *dao*, literary form and the Way, a duality has long been part of the intellectual history of the period, and while these are not the exact same things as ritual and sincerity, we will see that there is a correlation between certain visions of how ritual should be and what it should do, and corresponding ideas on how literary form should be connected to its normative content. Once again, the broader *wen* is actually closer to what we mean than the translation "literary form", in fact *wen* is often used in connection to ritual forms as well, and it is only the context and the act of translating that forces us to choose one or the other in English. Given his views of ritual expressed above, I therefore argue that it is no accident that Mu Xiu, who in the previous text discussed the proper name for his friend's ancestral hall, was also a proponent of the *guwen* agenda, as the following passage from his afterword for the edition of Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 (773–819) works makes clear:

The literature of the early Tang had not gotten rid of the air of the Zhou, the Sui, [that is,] of the Five Dynasties foremost was used to excel, and they got their [famous] name exclusively for grandiose songs and poems, the way had not yet reached its perfect state. Eventually the masters Han and Liu appeared, from then on they were able to exude an approximation¹⁰⁰ of the literary patterns of the ancients; their language, and benevolence (*ren*) and righteousness (*yi*) entailed each other like flower and fruit, and were not at odds. For example Han Yu's poem 'Yuanhe shengde', the inscription 'Pacifying the Western Huai Region', and Liu Zongyuan's 'Cultured Prose', were all rigorous in their diction and magnificent in their righteousness, they were composed like the classics.¹⁰¹

He goes on to lament the state of transmission of the collected works of both literati, and to describe how he rectified this by compiling editions and restoring the texts to the correct state, as far as this was possible. This passage clearly puts Mu Xiu in the camp of *guwen* scholars, a

¹⁰⁰ Orig. "approximately exude"

¹⁰¹ 舊本柳文後序. QSW. vol. 16, j. 322, p. 31.

movement that since the mid Tang, with some breaks reflecting the historical ones, had debated the relative importance of and exact relationship between *wen* and *dao*. A misalignment was perceived between *wen*, the ornate literary forms that were the cultural convention at the time, and the Way, that is, the values that these forms originally were supposed to convey and promote.¹⁰² Since Han Yu 韓愈 (+824), the *guwen* movement in different ways had made the argument that it was possible to reform *wen* in a way that closed the widening gap between the *dao* and forms of literary expression and convention. Ignoring for the moment the peculiarities of the different protagonists of this movement in mid Tang and Song, the example from Mu Xiu's brush expounds the general idea of proponents of the Ancient Style: the highly praised literary and especially poetic forms of the golden era of Tang poetry, while commendable as such, were solely used in an empty fashion. It was only Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan who were able to rework the literary form in such a way that it again entered a fruitful relationship with the values it was supposed to convey, or in the words of our framework, Mu Xiu's claim is that they made literary form more sincere; we will discuss shortly why it is useful to express the original duality of *wen* and *dao* in these terms. Yet, at the same time the fragmentation brought about by history that we saw in the previous passage is at work here as well, if somewhat more subtly: the two masters were composing texts that were *like* the classics, their *wen* was *approximating* the literary form brought forth by the ancients; moreover, their own work had been lost or corrupted in the meantime, which made Mu's efforts at restoring them necessary to begin with. The ambiguity of a fragmented world thus is still present, at least in its historical guise. The metaphor of the flower of *wen* that entails the fruit of benevolence and righteousness also preserves the independence of the literary form from the values it conveys; while it is necessary to reconnect the two, the goal is

¹⁰² Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 109.

still a state in which both sides are on equal terms. Much as in the case of the Confucius of the Analects and ritual, Mu Xiu's way of conceiving of this relationship between *wen* and *dao* is again unique in its historical manifestation, and it would be a worthwhile project in itself for intellectual history to map out changes and differences with respect to other thinkers, and to put Mu's ideas about the relationship between *wen* and *dao*, between form and content in their historical context, as has been done elsewhere for other thinkers of the 11th century.

In fact, Seligman et al. themselves at one point in their discussion of ritual draw the connection to the *guwen* problem of how to connect *wen* and *dao*, for when asking the question of “how can we express sincerity except by filtering it through the social conventions of language?”,¹⁰³ they answer in the negative, emphasizing the unbridgeable gap that exists between an inner state such as love, and our means to express it. In this way, in their general call for appreciation of both ritual and aspirations to sincerity they make a comparable proposition, albeit one coming from the exact opposite direction from the *guwen* movement: whereas the Ancient Style protagonists in their time had assumed that there was too much emphasis on empty form, Seligman et al. warn that today claims of sincerity are too dominant.¹⁰⁴ Therefore it is valid both from the perspective of Seligman et al., and from the perspective of 11th-century thinkers to include literary forms in the scope of this study of ritual ones; the question is whether and how both ritual and literary forms are subjected to universal demands about being true, authentic to an inner state, and conforming to certain universal norms and values, or if these forms are perceived as entities that

¹⁰³ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 106. The authors also expound the broad scope of their concept of ritual and ritual mode, drawing on examples from literature, music, and decorative forms in architecture (Chapter 5).

¹⁰⁴ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 179-182.

are essentially separate and not directly subject to the same absolute claims, and therefore need to be reconciled with each other each time a text is written, or a ritual is performed.

The two parts of this dissertation represent the two stages of this development: first, Part I offers a discussion of the claim of early *guwen* and the *qingli* protagonists that form, ritual and literary, should be connected to normative content, but also should be valued on its own terms; it also highlights the political and social implications that these claims had. Part II then shows how certain literati later came to value the normative content over the ritual and literary form, a phenomenon that we will call radical following the definition of radicalism and extremism offered by Seligman et al.; it also recounts how this radical opinion led them to clash with the remaining proponents of the first view in a specific political situation that demanded a decision between the two ways of tackling the issue. It is important, however, to emphasize that the two positions on ritual and sincerity, or form and normative content, did not come into being independently of each other; the more radical views of the latter group would be inconceivable without the efforts of the preceding generation to convince literati of their point of view, as well as without their own, failed attempt at political reform during *qingli*. In fact, we will see shortly that one core member of the earlier, *qingli* association would himself draw the conclusion that one had to connect *wen* and *dao* in a fashion that favored the latter over the former, and in this and other ways be more radical in one's support for the good, the sincere cause of the *guwen* movement in the different areas that it targeted.

The following discussion of a specific incident from the 1050s involving key figures of the *qingli* reform movement will serve – *en miniature* – to delineate this argument. At the same time, it

continues the theoretical discussion *in medias res*, since it allows us to demonstrate with a concrete example how the two positions on how to connect and value form and normative content could have influenced the social choices that the actors made – that is, how ideas could have social consequences. The fact that the two participants in this exchange of arguments, Fu Bi and Ouyang Xiu, both had been part of the earlier reform effort of the 1040s, and thus originally were political and ideological allies, even friends, shows the divisive potential that philosophical differences in this regard had. It is true that this intellectual dispute appears not to have spelled the immediate end of the relationship between Fu and Ouyang, showing once again that ideas were not everything in literati relationships at this point. However, as we shall see in Part II, Fu Bi over the years following this incident declined to throw his support behind a political campaign initiated by his former allies Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi, and in 1064 finally broke publicly with his *qingli* associates. In this way, the account of this debate also serves to dissipate all remaining doubts that the chosen framework is too close to a history of ideas approach à la Lovejoy, which looks at ideas outside of their context and in isolation from the event and the actor, and thus remains historically irrelevant.¹⁰⁵

At the heart of this debate, taking place in the 1050s,¹⁰⁶ lie two inscriptions commissioned for Fan Zhongyan's burial, one epitaph (*muzhiming* 墓志銘), and one *shendaobei* 神道碑, the

¹⁰⁵ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: a study of the history of an idea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936.

¹⁰⁶ The exact timeline is somewhat hard to establish; Fan died in 1052, the letter by Ouyang is dated 1055. Schottenhammer provides 1054 as a date for the *shendaobei*. Angela Schottenhammer, "Characteristics of Song Epitaphs," in: Dieter Kuhn (ed.), *Burial in Song China*. (Würzburger Sinologische Schriften) Heidelberg: edition forum, 1994. p. 253-306, p. 272. See also James T.C. Liu's account and assessment of the incident: James T.C. Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu: An Eleventh-Century Neo-Confucianist*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967. p. 37-39. Cong Ellen Zhang's dating and chronology will be discussed below.

inscription on the spirit path stele, which was placed outside the grave and gave this kind of text its name.¹⁰⁷ These were authored by old friends from the times when Fan was the political figurehead of the *qingli* reform movement in the 1040s, namely Ouyang Xiu and Fu Bi.¹⁰⁸ While being quite similar to each other over long passages, there are important differences in their treatment of Fan's dealings with his political enemies during his time in active politics, most importantly Chancellor Lü Yijian. Ouyang Xiu in his *shendaobei*¹⁰⁹ records the clashes between Fan Zhongyan, and Empress Dowager Liu 劉太后 (968–1033) and Lü Yijian, respectively, but also points to incidents where Fan defended or even worked together with his enemies: in the former case, he supposedly argued against voices clamoring to posthumously punish Empress Liu, on the grounds that “she had received the mandate from the former emperor (Zhenzong 真宗 reg. 997–1022) and had safeguarded the health of the current one, [...] therefore one should overlook her smaller mistakes in favor of keeping [the image] of her great virtue intact.”¹¹⁰ In the latter case, Ouyang Xiu reports that at a moment of military crisis, after Lü Yijian and Fan Zhongyan had resigned, “Lü returned as chancellor, and Fan Zhongyan also rose again and was

¹⁰⁷ For more information about this genre of text, see: Bossler, *Powerful Relations*. p. 12-24. She describes the changes in the style of eulogies from Tang to Song.

¹⁰⁸ Cong Ellen Zhang has discussed the various disagreements surrounding the two inscriptions; she argues that Ouyang Xiu originally was supposed to write the *muzhiming*, and only after it became clear that he could not be finished in time for the burial was he designated the author of the *shendaobei*, which could be erected later. Cong Ellen Zhang, “Writing Fan Zhongyan’s Epitaphs.” *Conference on Middle Period China, 800–1400*, Harvard University, 2014. Date accessed: Jul. 30, 2014. p. 2-4. While this incident originally was included and discussed here independently of her paper, Zhang’s wider scope and translations have greatly helped me to refine my argument about its more specific political significance; for Zhang, it mainly is an expression of the fact that multiple parties were involved with writing inscriptions, not just the author that it was ascribed to. I do wonder if the change in authorship of the *muzhiming* was to some degree connected to this difference of opinion about the content, not just the problems with timing, as Zhang states (p. 4).

¹⁰⁹ 范文正公神道碑. QSW. vol. 35, j. 746, p. 222-226.

¹¹⁰ QSW. vol. 35, j. 746, p. 223. Other sources inform us that this incident followed the revelation that Liu was not the emperor’s biological mother, and of allegations that his mother’s death had been suspicious. SS. vol. 24, j. 242, p. 8615, 8617.

employed [in government], whereupon the two in a friendly manner came to an agreement to join forces to pacify the ‘bandits’; the literati of the realm all praised the two for this, but the talk of factionalism subsequently prevailed [again] and could not be stopped.”¹¹¹ Despite making clear earlier that Lü Yijian indeed had used accusations of factionalism against Fan and his friends in the past, it is interesting that Ouyang Xiu here, allegedly in 1054, gives the impression that the subsequent “talk of factionalism” that in his analysis ended the *qingli* reform was something that had gained its own momentum, and could not be stopped despite the good intentions and cooperation of those involved in the dispute originally. This is particularly intriguing in view of the fact that only about ten years earlier, after Lü had resigned and when the *qingli* reformers were at the pinnacle of their power, in his role as censor he had accused Lü of all sorts of crimes, including secretly trying to influence government after his resignation.¹¹²

Both episodes are absent from Fu Bi’s much longer epitaph,¹¹³ which limits itself to reporting the instances when Fan Zhongyan spoke out against Empress Dowager Liu and clashed with Chancellor Lü, making for a much less ambiguous image of the leader of the *qingli* reform. On the other hand, Fu Bi relates in detail how Lü Yijian set a trap for Fan Zhongyan by promoting

¹¹¹ QSW. vol. 35, j. 746, p. 225. As we will see below, it is not always possible to rely on the *Changbian* to corroborate evidence from other sources, since sometimes the similar or identical wording in CB indicates that it had drawn its material from the same source. However, in this case the wording is entirely different, and is accompanied by other, more indirect evidence that Fan and his group and Lü actually were working together: for the account of the reconciliation, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3014; for an item of policy that was discussed and decided on by the “great ministers” (presumably including Lü), and which had been suggested by Han Qi “and others”, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 129, p. 3062. In 1042, in addition to his position in the chancellery, Lü was given a concurrent position in the military commission, increasing his power and influence. This happens on Fu Bi’s earlier suggestion (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3283). This will be discussed below.

¹¹² For that series of memorials: CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444-3446.

¹¹³ 范文正公仲淹墓誌銘. QSW. vol. 29, j. 610, p. 56-62.

him to the difficult post of magistrate of Kaifeng district,¹¹⁴ whereas Ouyang in the same instance just refers to “powerful and crafty ministers” hating Fan. In addition to these differences in content, Fu Bi only refers to Lü by the generic term ‘chancellor’ (*zaixiang* 宰相), without using his name, which instead in one version of the text is provided in an annotation.¹¹⁵ By contrast, Ouyang Xiu, when first mentioning Lü, gives the name in combination with a more specific title ‘Chancellor Lü’ (*Lü chengxiang* 呂丞相), and for the remainder of the text continues using the honorific *Lü gong* 呂公 when referring to Lü Yijian.¹¹⁶ As we shall see, it is precisely these discrepancies between the two inscriptions that reflect a difference of opinion, and allow us to take a look at two very different ideas about what a literary text like this should aim to accomplish, and how it should be written. While there are differences between these two genres of epitaph, the debate below shows that both were intended to be public, and part of the historical record given the importance of the deceased, and therefore in general are comparable when it comes to the intentions of the authors.

¹¹⁴ QSW. vol. 29, j. 610, p. 58.

¹¹⁵ *Mingchen beizhuan wanyan zhi jizhong* 名臣碑傳琬琰之集中. 上, j. 12. Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition (electronic version).

¹¹⁶ It is clear that this is intentional, because Fu uses the term *chengxiang* for a different official who recommended Fan (QSW. vol. 29, j. 610, p. 57). At least in the QSW that is the case, I am unsure what version Zhang is drawing on for her observation that Fu also speaks of Lü as *chengxiang*. (Zhang, “Writing Fan Zhongyan’s Epitaphs.” p. 9). In Ouyang Xiu’s text, both Lü and the official friendly to Fan are called *chengxiang* (QSW. vol. 35, j. 746, p. 224). According to the dictionary of Song administration, *chengxiang* at this time is used as an alternative form for *shixiang*, which in turn is applied to a specific set of titles, more specific than the term *zaixiang*. Gong Yanming 龚延明, *Songdai guanzhi cidian* 宋代官制辞典. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997. p. 76, 81. Note also an instance where the usage of *chengxiang* as a more specific title and the more generic, less honorific use of *zaixiang* is exemplified in the official biography of Empress Dowager Liu, when Lü is spoken of as *chengxiang*, but refers to himself as *zaixiang* (SS. vol. 24, j. 242, p. 8616).

According to the record of the *Shao shi wenjian houlu*, Fan Zhongyan's son Chunren 范純仁 (1027–1101), in his displeasure about what he considered to be a misrepresentation of events on the part of Ouyang Xiu, not only asked Ouyang Xiu for corrections, but after they were denied went so far as to excise passages from the text of the *shendaobei* without the authorization of the author, causing Ouyang Xiu to distance himself from this version.¹¹⁷ Fan Chunren took offence at Ouyang's usage of specific expressions, such as the claim that his father had “in a friendly manner” “joined forces” with what hitherto had been his political arch-enemy, Lü Yijian.¹¹⁸ However, the main part of the record in *Shao shi wenjian houlu* consists of a letter by Fu Bi to Ouyang, in which he clearly defends the decisions he took when writing the epitaph, and implicitly attacks Ouyang Xiu's version. The *biji* gives the impression that Fu and Ouyang at first were in agreement about how to write the inscriptions, but then one of them changed his mind, but regardless of the exact sequence of letters and events,¹¹⁹ this text provides the unique opportunity to learn about Fu Bi's particular vision of the purpose of *wen*, and its function of promoting the good and defending against the bad:

For the most part, in the composition of words, among which there are those which undertake to express good and bad, and those which can serve as exhortation and admonishment, it is necessary to make the words clear and frank,

¹¹⁷ *Wenjian houlu*. j. 21, p. 163.

¹¹⁸ Note the different words used for “joined forces” in the *Shao shi wenjian houlu* and QSW versions of the letter (共力 vs. 戮力), the meaning should be the same, however.

¹¹⁹ *Wenjian houlu*. j. 21, p. 164. Zhang dates this letter to 1053, before Ouyang Xiu had written his own text, and although noting some anxiety about Ouyang Xiu's reaction to Fu's inscription she treats it as separate from the dispute about Ouyang Xiu's *shendaobei*, which was only written in 1054. Her dating follows “a close resemblance to the content of a letter from Ouyang Xiu to a Yao” dated to 1053 (QSW. vol. 33, j. 711, p. 354), but at best this seems to indicate that the letter was written in or after 1053, not that it had to be written *in* 1053. Zhang, “Writing Fan Zhongyan's Epitaphs.” p. 4n20. Zhang also assumes that at first there was agreement between the two authors about the way to write the text. I will follow the assumption of the *biji* that the letter was an expression of the (later) dispute about the content of the two inscriptions, despite being unable to establish the exact sequence of events and letters myself.

for the good and bad to be made obvious, to cause the one [about] to do evil to instantly recognize the admonishment, and the one [about] to do good to instantly recognize the exhortation; this indeed is the purpose of writing. How would it be sufficient to study the dense subtleties and profound tact of the sage creating the *Chunqiu*, [subtleties and tact] that caused later people to transmit it, annotate it, and still fail to understand it; time and again subcommentaries were drawn up, and one still failed to fully fathom it, to the point that it was talked about, interpreted, taught, and debated for as long as one thousand years, and the scholars to this day still cannot get to the bottom of it and understand it. I say that only the sage can create something like the *Chunqiu*, since the demise of the sage, nobody was able to accomplish that, and even if one were to create something [like the *Chunqiu*], one would still not again establish [the same] credibility with posterity.

A scholar can [but] approximate the general principle of the *Chunqiu*, establish models and examples, praise it if it is good, dismiss it if it is bad; if there is someone whom it is absolutely necessary to guard against, to diminish him with words is acceptable; it is essential to avoid that people of posterity after more than one thousand years fail to recognize its meaning. If the good cannot be advised and the bad not be admonished by it, then what purpose would written language have? Yet, [if the situation] is spelled out in full, and the bad himself fails [to heed] the reprimands, and the good himself fails [to take] the advice, then it is the fault of the individual, what fault would be with the language?

For a long time I have been pained [by the fact] that nowadays, when people write, nothing at all is expressed clearly; instead they just equivocate and remain ambiguous. Doing the right thing certainly is not easy, there are those who encounter slander and ruin, those who are exiled and reprimanded, there are those who are impoverished, exiled and hungry, and then even executed, or worse, extinguished with all their relatives. And yet, someone who were to wield the brush seeking nothing but one's own convenience, without expressing anything by it, indeed is a criminal. A man who does evil without fail employs treacherous schemes and clever deception, corruption and factions, any means to escape punishment; if furthermore it goes that far that he not only completely escapes punishment, but his sons and grandsons even continue without end to enjoy his [evil] legacy, then one can say that this is very good luck [for them indeed]. If then on top of that the one who wields the brush fears them, and does not dare to spell out their evilness, then what is evil becomes even more evil, and the good people continue to be constrained and not inspired.

The good man can only in terms of salary and official position be defeated and restrained by the lesser man. All he needs is a three or four inch brush, touching his mouth and angling his head, he glorifies virtue and censors evil, makes the good man noble and the bad man humble, makes the good man live and the bad man die, this must start to come to pass through us, it can't be changed if one remains silent because of some timidity, and endures to be unhappy. As to the composition of Fan Zhongyan's epitaph, this indeed is this guideline that has been followed, although regrettably there was only the intention, without [being able to find] the appropriate words [to do so]; I myself even would say that the goodness of Fan was made somewhat too little apparent, and the evilness of the villain is made somewhat too little cruel [in it].

Now you have also said, I quote: '[When] I have something on my chest that I want to say, I certainly ought not avoid anything, I write it clearly, giving vent to the anger of righteousness and loyalty, isn't that also stirring?'¹²⁰ This thus seems to second what I have said. And yet, in my words, when I publicly approve and publicly disapprove, then this doesn't in any way constitute slander for the villain. For example in Fan's epitaph, what scolding there is of the villain, is all based on facts and corresponds to what happened, and in its entirety is what the people of the realm heard and know; if the criticism had been made up, then the other family's numerous sons, who all have power and influence, certainly would be up in arms with accusations of slander, it would be judged without sympathy.¹²¹

For Fu Bi, a writer has the opportunity and the responsibility to right the wrongs of both the past and the future in his writings. The brush is a powerful, and indeed sometimes the only weapon in

¹²⁰ Location of this quote unclear, not found in *Siku quanshu*.

¹²¹ *Wenjian houlu*. j. 21, p. 163-164. QSW. vol. 29, j. 608, p. 20-21.

the hands of the good man; he must use it to the fullest in the name of bettering the world. For the past, all he can do is name names, and set the record straight, ironically by denying Lü Yijian his name and proper status; slander must be avoided, but there remains some latitude “to diminish the evil person with words,” or put differently, to tweak the words and titles in a way that promotes the good cause, and, within these limits, create a text in which the good in every aspect wins out over the bad. Ideally this will ensure that the real world will become a better place too, and that future generations have no doubt about the moral statement the text conveys. Fu Bi criticizes current literature production as too weak and equivocal, and it is certainly not a coincidence that in his epitaph he praises Fan for being famous for conveying the *dao* and refraining from producing “empty literature”.¹²² It is also interesting that he seems to argue that one actually needs to be clearer and more straightforward than the “censure” of the *Chunqiu*, generally considered to be the first and best example of a moralizing classic text, a position that the compiler of the *Shao shi wenjian houlu* in his comment finds lamentable, and gives him a sense of foreboding, most probably regarding the divisive consequences that extreme judgments like that would soon have.¹²³ But as supposedly was the case with the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the normative, moral function of the text, the promotion of good and prevention of bad behavior, is the most important consideration for the author, other considerations such as objectivity or providing correct information about the names and ranks of the actors, most notably the bad ones, are secondary, unless it concerns the deceased himself, as we shall see. And yet, it is important to

¹²² QSW. vol. 29, j. 610, p. 61.

¹²³ *Wenjian houlu*. j. 21, p. 164. This seems to be in line with the criticism that *Shaoshi wenjian houlu* has for divisive and radical ideas. Note how Western readers such as Legge share Fu Bi’s puzzlement with the terse content and less than obvious meaning of the *Chunqiu*. James Legge (transl.), “Prolegomena,” *The Chinese Classics: with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes*. 5. *The Ch’un Ts’ew with the Tso Chuen*. Taipei: SMC Publ., 1991. p. 3, quoted in: Dieter Kuhn, *Status und Ritus: das China der Aristokraten von den Anfängen bis zum 10. Jahrhundert nach Christus*. (Würzburger Sinologische Schriften) Heidelberg: edition forum 1991. p. 194-196.

emphasize that in Fu's view, notwithstanding his admission that one could "diminish with words", the narrative was still true enough to the facts, maintaining that it would hold up to the scrutiny even of witnesses from the family of the attacked.

While no direct reply by Ouyang Xiu could be located, with the help of a letter to another friend, Xu Wudang 徐無黨 (1024–1086?), it is possible to reconstruct Ouyang Xiu's side of the argument and to discuss the main points of the difference of opinion between the two erstwhile reformers. The fact that both letters at times use the same language, as well as Ouyang Xiu's own reference to hearing about Fu Bi's complaints, and the request to explain everything to him, suggests that this letter indeed forms part of Ouyang Xiu's reaction to Fu's general claims, regardless whether or not it actually was part of Ouyang Xiu's reply specifically to the above letter. Here is how Ouyang criticizes Fu Bi and justifies his own choices when writing the *shendaobei*:

[...] You have informed me about [the fact] that Fu Bi is talking about (my) *shendaobei* for Fan Zhongyan; at the time when I was in Ying, we already had discussed [it] in detail and determined that putting it like this (as I have in the inscription) is to be considered fair. Recounting the Lü affair [in this way], one can see with Fan that his virtue and tolerance [had the potential] to include all under heaven, and that he was so loyal and righteous that he put the state first. When one records each and every fact [and event] for the Lü affair [as I have done], then one will establish credibility with all the [future] ages. [My text] is not like when two enemies sue each other, each embellishing the facts of the [court case], leading later generations not to believe them, [because] they consider their words to be prejudiced. By and large, my inscription is impartial without passionate language; Fu Bi's inscription is overwhelmed by a heart that hates evil. It is not to wonder if future generations, [even] when they get [to see] nothing but the differences of these two texts, [still] will question it (his text) on grounds of this. The listing in it (my *shendaobei*) of offices [Fan held] is not faulty, it merely is abbreviated, and in the end of [the *shendaobei*]¹²⁴ I already have explained myself saying 'I did not write about the sequence of offices held, since the people of later times will not [have to] seek the sequence of official ranks here [in this inscription, because there are other sources

¹²⁴ QSW. vol. 35, j. 746, p. 225. Ouyang indeed explains that he did not record things like this in detail, because they are recorded elsewhere.

for that].¹²⁵ If you get a chance, explain this all to Mr. Fu, if he insists on changing what I have done, then ask him to have another person write it.¹²⁶

The debate thus centers on the question of the proper relationship between the written word and what is morally right or true to the fact, and whether or not it is necessary and admissible to make concessions to the latter when trying to promote the former. Ouyang here took the stance that it was neither appropriate nor helpful to “embellish the facts as if arguing a court case,” and gloss over the breaks that Fan’s political life had undergone; the fact that he was a morally impeccable official would become obvious in spite, or in fact because of these apparent inconsistencies; they would only serve to show that Fan Zhongyan always had the best interests of the country on his mind, much along the lines of the ethos that Fan had professed to himself when claiming in 1040 that “What I have spoken about in the past were just matters of state, what [personal] grudge would I harbor against Lü Yijian!”¹²⁷ On the contrary, making the account sound like a court case against an enemy would ensure that posterity would find it biased and untrustworthy. It must be emphasized that Ouyang Xiu in the past had not been averse to political hyperbole when it suited his cause, such as when he relentlessly attacked whom he saw as the political enemy of the reform, Lü Yijian, during *qingli*, despite the fact that Lü had officially resigned by that time.¹²⁸ This previous attitude is what Fu Bi himself pointed out to Ouyang Xiu, when he quoted the latter’s own statement back to him, a statement that seems to reflect what Fu Bi was doing in his inscription. And yet, Ouyang Xiu proposed here that in this

¹²⁵ Note that in QSW only half of this sentence is given as quotation, but it would make sense to consider all of it as such, because that is what he explains in the *shendaobei*.

¹²⁶ 與澠池徐宰; 四. QSW. vol. 33, j. 711, p. 344. Here I have profited greatly from Zhang’s translation of this letter, despite deviating from it at points. Zhang, “Writing Fan Zhongyan’s Epitaphs.” p. 7-8.

¹²⁷ CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3014.

¹²⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444-3446.

instance and in this genre of text, it was necessary to remain “impartial”, getting carried away by “a heart that hates evil” would be counterproductive. Especially compared to later thinkers discussed below, it is noteworthy that the inner state (Fu Bi’s heart that hates evil) for Ouyang Xiu can be a problem, whereas Fu Bi presumably draws on Ouyang Xiu himself when he puts the emphasis on the important role of feelings like righteous anger in the literary enterprise. In the same vein, we see in his *shendaobei* that for Ouyang Xiu it was also important to keep to the proper names and honorifics, and thus the ritual trappings of status and social connection, even for the villain who does not deserve these titles morally; the assertion that on the other hand it was not necessary to record the exact sequence of office held by the deceased shows that this did not merely serve a documentary purpose.

The claim to be made here is that the dispute between the two reformers, for the realm of literary endeavor, revolves exactly around the issues that will form the framework of this study – the question of how to define and regulate the relationship between the form, ritual or literary, and the function that this form is supposed to fulfill; or the content that it is supposed to convey. Is it acceptable that at times the connection between the two remains loose, or in the case of ritual, that there is no unified meaning or normative content beyond the immediate situation, or do we subordinate the form to function, content, or meaning? Should the moral function of the text, to promote the good and diminish the bad, take precedence over everything else? Fu Bi, in contrast to Ouyang Xiu, answers this question in the affirmative, and proposes that writing predominantly must serve a normative purpose, even at the expense of some factual complexity. In his treatment of the details and with the language he uses he is creating a text in which this purpose and function are paramount over other considerations, including objectivity of the narrative, and

exact reflection of the official ranks of the evil participants. While still maintaining that he is true to the facts, Fu in his call to diminish the evil with words makes the claim that, by following his prescription, one will not only in writing recreate the world as it should be, but eventually be able to influence reality, so that it conforms to his ideas about good and bad; at the same time, the inner state, the heart, feelings such as righteous anger play a large role in his argument, which is why this is also a sincerity claim along the lines we have defined above, in that it proposes a direct connection between form, inner state, and larger normative goals. The discussion itself exposes this claim of overarching normative goals and sincerity as problematic, given that his own ally and old friend fails to subscribe to it. Denying Lü his name, honorific and part of his official status serves to reinforce the idea that he is a villain who in an ideal world should not have been allowed to keep his position in the ritual and administrative hierarchy, and once again imbues the form with normative value in a way that denies ritual's lack of constant meaning, moral or otherwise, in the real world. To reiterate, in Seligman et al.'s view, sincerity claims such as Fu Bi's are prone to lead to personal hypocrisy, because reality never will conform to such simplistic, unambiguous visions.¹²⁹ From the perspective of their argument, it is therefore not surprising that, when looking at the evidence for the cooperation between Fan Zhongyan and Lü Yijian, Fu's pretense that all of this had never happened appears quite hypocritical, especially considering hints that in 1042 one drew on an earlier proposal made by Fu Bi to, at least for a brief period, extend Lü's grand secretarial powers to the military commission.¹³⁰ In other words,

¹²⁹ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 108, 113-114.

¹³⁰ In 1042/7, in addition to his position in the chancellery, Lü is given a concurrent position in the military commission, increasing his power and influence. Supposedly this is following a proposal made by Fu Bi to concurrently have the chancellors administer the military commission (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3283). For the proposal supposedly made in 1040, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3014. See Part I for a more detailed discussion.

rather than just whitewashing his deceased friend, he was also deleting his own involvement with the ‘enemy’ from the record.

Despite the fact that Ouyang Xiu’s position at first glance seems more ‘sincere’ in a common sense when he calls for objectivity, it is he who refrains from entirely subordinating the literary form to the function that it fulfills; by leaving in place the breaks in the narrative, as well as the ritual honorifics for the opponent, Ouyang demonstrates his acceptance of the limits of an imperfect, fragmented world in which not everything can be universally categorized in terms of good and bad, and in which bad people get promoted. In this way, while being connected and beneficial to what is morally right and proper, his *wen* preserves a certain distance and independence, and is not expected to neatly fit its professed normative purpose, for both in the letter and in the inscription Ouyang Xiu still purports to follow a normative intention with his writing;¹³¹ inner states are less important here, and in fact Ouyang Xiu sees it as a problem when Fu Bi lets his inner state dominate his *wen* in this instance.

This exchange again speaks to the fact that ritual and sincerity, and *wen* and *dao* are related concepts and comparable, but there are two reasons why we do not limit ourselves to using the more common terms *wen* and *dao* in our discussion: firstly, the broad interpretation of the word ritual/*li* allows us to include forms of social ritual, such as letters, recommendations, mentorships, ranks, honorifics, etc. in the scope of our study, which will help to bridge the gap between ideas and social relationships that hitherto has proven hard to overcome by discussing literary *wen*

¹³¹ This becomes apparent from his letter; towards the end of the *shendaobei* Ouyang Xiu also states that he will “write about his (Fan Zhongyan’s) concern for the realm, because that would have been the will of Mr. Fan.” QSW. vol. 35, j. 746, p. 225.

alone; it will allow us to show how an idea, in this case concerning what ritual was and should be, could be correlated to, or even have an effect on, how actors conceived of and practiced their relationships with each other. Secondly, the word sincerity/*cheng* highlights the fact that we are not just talking about abstract moral norms, or the Way, but a very personal ethics, that is, inner states, their connection to what is said, written, and done, as well as how it is possible to bring them in line with the more general norms. At the same time using this term also allows us to keep our distance from the *dao* of *daoxue* for the moment, although this description should have shown that *daoxue* poses similar ethical questions.

In this study, we will for the most part draw on social ritual to bridge the conceptual gap between ideas and social relationships. However, what makes this instance of debate between Ouyang Xiu and Fu Bi especially interesting is the fact that, in addition to the discussion of different ideas about *wen* expressed within the *qingli* reform/*guwen* movement in the 1050s, it already provides an opportunity to also demonstrate how these ideas could have influenced what social relationships the actors formed and dissolved. On the one hand, Fu Bi's letter calls on people to make clear, exclusive distinctions between good and bad, and his lamentations that the sons and grandsons of the enemy were still powerful and enjoying Lü Yijian's legacy make his letter a direct attack on the family as well, as it still played an important role in Song elite life. In fact, the Lü's would bring forth important names in Song political and elite life well into the Southern Song.¹³² Zhang has quite vividly described the incredulity with which other literati, not just Fan's

¹³² See for example a book discussing the different Lües and their role in Song politics, although not all officials that are discussed there are of the Lü Yijian family, and one important descendant, Lü Zuqian is left out here, possibly because he was chiefly known for his philosophical contributions, and was less involved in politics. Lü Huiqing, the reviled reformer, is also mentioned, for example. The occasion for the book was the incorporation of Lü family heirlooms into a museum, containing purported letters from Su Che and Sima Guang, and the introduction makes it

son Chunren, reacted to Ouyang Xiu's claim that Fan Zhongyan had colluded with his enemy, they just could not imagine how an epitome of a 'good man' such as Fan could possibly have acted in this way;¹³³ it would seem that Fu's exclusive attitude towards relationships was shared by many at this point. As mentioned above, Fu's relationships to his own comrades in arms, and not just to Ouyang, would deteriorate in the course of the following years, and finally break down in 1064, which seems to reflect the prediction made by Seligman et al. that overbearing sincerity claims will lead to social destruction.¹³⁴ On the other hand, Ouyang Xiu's social relationships would expand and get more inclusive by finding a way to overcome old enmities: he had started a regular exchange of letters with Lü Gongzhu, the son of Lü Yijian mentioned above, in 1050,¹³⁵ just seven years after he had last attacked the family, and especially a brother of Gongzhu in one of his memorials during *qingli*.¹³⁶ Two recommendations for Lü Gongzhu from the 1050s show that this was not just a private exchange, and that Ouyang Xiu was openly supporting the son of his former enemy.¹³⁷ Cynics might claim that the change in social relationships is the cause and not the effect of the mindset that prompted Ouyang Xiu to be more lenient towards the father of his new acquaintance; from this perspective, political factions and

appear as if political and economic leaders took an interest in this, namely the provincial governor and a businessman who both had the surname Lü. Si Shunwei 斯舜威, *Zaixiang shijia – Liang Song Lü shi zhengzhi jituan jilüe* 宰相世家-两宋吕氏政治集团纪略 [A family of chancellors – brief record of the political circle of the Lü clan during the two Song Dynasties]. Shanghai: Dongfang Chubans Zhongxin, 2011.

¹³³ Zhang, "Writing Fan Zhongyan's Epitaphs." p. 9-11.

¹³⁴ *Shao shi wenjian lu* claims that the break between Fu Bi and Han Qin and Ouyang Xiu happened in 1064, on occasion of the resignation of the empress dowager from the regency, forced on her by Han Qi; it also connects it to the *puyi* question (*Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 22). *Changbian* reports a more drawn-out process that started earlier and only found its breaking point in 1064 (CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4866).

¹³⁵ QSW. vol. 33, j. 705, p. 213.

¹³⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444-3446. For attack on Lü Gongzhuo, brother of Gongzhu, see CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3502.

¹³⁷ 薦王安石呂公著劄子 (1054–55). QSW. vol. 32, j. 687, p. 252. 舉呂公著自代狀 (1059). QSW. vol. 32, j. 674, p. 10.

social relationships changed and led the actors to use language that was more accommodating of the other. It almost seems as if Fu Bi in his letter is accusing Ouyang Xiu of having sold himself out to the Lü family, which given Ouyang's own fame at the time is a bit farfetched;¹³⁸ it appears unlikely that he needed Lü Gongzhu at this point, the younger literatus probably had more to gain from this connection, following the death of his father Lü Yijian. However, the problem with a view that gives practical, personal interests precedence over ideas is the fact that, in this case, Ouyang Xiu renewed or upheld the contact to Lü Gongzhu even after they had had their own political clash in the course of the *puyi* debate in 1065–6; that they had been on different sides politically did not prevent Ouyang from congratulating Lü, and one of his brothers, or recommending another *puyi* adversary, Sima Guang, for political office in 1067.¹³⁹ This shows that outside of acute political disputes it is an inclusive attitude that guides Ouyang's social relationships; especially after it turned out during the *puyi* debate that corresponding with and supporting Lü Gongzhu had not yielded any political benefit, it is hard to see how Ouyang Xiu's renewed contact to Lü and the endorsement of Sima Guang could have been driven by calculated personal or political interest on the part of the more famous and higher-ranking official, who was on his way out by this point anyway. Instead, the ideas about objectivity, the importance of formal titles, and the necessary fragmentation in the biographies of good men that appear in the center of his dispute with Fu Bi would provide a better explanation for his social behavior. If Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu could interact with their enemies, the contrast to the quarrels the *xining* and *yuanyou* groups had *among themselves* becomes even more pronounced.

¹³⁸ James T.C. Liu also discusses these allegations in connection with the epitaph affair, and dismisses them: Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 38.

¹³⁹ Letters of congratulations to Lü Gongbi and Gongzhu, dated 1067 and 1068, respectively: QSW. vol. 33, j. 703, p. 164; vol. 33, j. 702, p. 160. 薦司馬光劄子(1067). QSW. vol. 32, j. 690, p. 303.

From this perspective, the dispute about the epitaphs is not just indicative of the larger point that inscriptions are subject to multiple influences, as Zhang argues convincingly,¹⁴⁰ but also has a more immediate literary-intellectual, political, as well as social significance, for the two inscriptions were meant to promote and support two different normative claims about how to act in these realms. In this way, both authors draw on the life of their friend and mentor to disseminate a contradictory message about what Fan Zhongyan should stand for as an example, a discrepancy that in fact time and again finds a reflection in the other sources about his life as well. Whereas Fu Bi highlighted Fan Zhongyan's unwavering enmity with bad elements, that is his social exclusivity, for Ouyang Xiu the fact of the matter was that "his virtue and tolerance [had the potential] to encompass all under heaven, and he was loyal and righteous to the point that he put the state first." The argument to be made here and in the following study is that Ouyang Xiu's views on ritual, as well as the fundamental acceptance of ambiguities in people's lives that is evident in the above text also allowed him to make friends, or at least exchange ritual courtesies with the family of his enemy, and explains why later he would be willing and able to reestablish contact and ritual relationships with his political foes. In other words, this exchange underlines the fact that Ouyang Xiu at this point preached *and* practiced social inclusiveness, and was willing to overcome old enmities despite previous disagreements, and despite having made similarly exclusive, normative attacks during *qingli*.

Thus, it is precisely the point that Ouyang Xiu is not completely sincere or objective in his description either: considering his inscription with the background of these social relationships in

¹⁴⁰ Zhang, "Writing Fan Zhongyan's Epitaphs." p. 12, 15.

mind, it seems that Ouyang Xiu, while claiming to preserve the ‘objective’ record of the controversy of the *qingli*-period, in his composition for his friend Fan Zhongyan creates his own subjunctive when he himself does some tweaking of the facts to fit his purpose – if in a more subtle and indeed more limited way – merely by omitting the name of the opponent in some of the cabals that Fan had had to face. Together with the honorifics for the enemy, this imagined ‘as if’ serves to ameliorate the very same controversies he recounts, as well as his own participation in them, thus helping him to overcome the social rifts of the earlier disputes, and to include the family of the enemy in his social circles. In this context it is irrelevant if this, or the post-*puyi* letters to Lü Gongzhu and Sima Guang were genuine expressions of his inner state, or ‘mere’ conventions and social ritual; it still remains a very significant finding after a political fight as bitter as the *puyi* dispute, although there were opponents Ouyang Xiu did not renew contact with. Either way these interactions show that Ouyang Xiu did not share the totalizing, and therefore excluding attitude that shines through in Fu Bi’s text and letter. In this way, we have come full circle to our initial question about the nature of political relationships, or ‘factions’, in the 11th century; while Ouyang’s and Fan’s idea of an affiliation of ‘good men’ (*junzi*) will be at the heart of Part I, it already has become clear that the inclusive attitude displayed here left the door open for diverse literati to be included in the ranks of the ‘good men’, without letting the common ambiguities and inconsistencies of human interactions and differences of opinion become too limiting a factor. Contrary to what Levine argues, the common language and social convention could be employed by Ouyang Xiu in both an inclusive and exclusive manner, both ritually and sincerely, and it is not always entirely clear from the interaction itself which of these interpretations is applicable. Rather than being imprecise, it was this ambiguity that would serve the purpose of maintaining coherence across differences of opinion, ideas, and background, by

constantly defining, affirming, breaking, and remaking social relationships, as we have seen from our discussion of Seligman et al. and Latour. On the other hand it also should have become apparent that the example of Fu Bi's totalizing attitude towards writing is intellectually connected to the normative claims of Wang Anshi and Sima Guang discussed at the outset of this introduction; the goal of Part II will be to in a similar way link these attitudes to what happened in regard to the social relationships and political projects of the late Renzong (仁宗 reg. 1022–1063) and Yingzong era (英宗 reg. 1063-1067). In this regard it is especially important to point out again that Ouyang Xiu and Fu Bi came from the same political background of the *qingli* reform, in other words, that both positions have their origin in the same group of *guwen* literati; likewise, we will see that the two camps that faced each other in the *puyi* dispute in fact had been on the same side earlier, at least politically.

Reappraising Song modernity through ritual and sincerity

Before finally delving into the political and intellectual discourses of the 11th century, allow me to introduce another layer to the general framework and argument, namely the comparative aspect of it. To reiterate, Seligman et al.'s critique is that we moderns are largely ignorant about what ritual is and should be, and instead marginalize it either by ignoring it entirely when constructing our worldview, or by relegating it to the role of an accessory to another, larger utopian or normative vision. Nevertheless, ritual still constantly takes place in our world, regardless whether we think about it or not; this is why what makes us modern is not an absolute, material difference to pre-modernity, but a relatively larger, overbearing emphasis on such

modes of thought that we have termed ‘sincere’, which, however, as such are nothing new or exclusive to modernity, or the West, for that matter. In this way, the authors break down the firm, absolute boundaries between modern and pre-modern, and also between cultures as such, which is why their argument provides an ideal starting point for readdressing a question that lately has gone out of fashion: in the past, some authors have linked and compared the Song Dynasty to Western modernity, because they saw various similarities to the Western historical experience.¹⁴¹

The largest problem with talking about modernity in a comparative fashion is that it is such a complex process and diverse phenomenon, with many different facets and experiences to be considered; as such, qualifications will apply to any such comparative attempt; nevertheless, the claim to be made here is that, in the sense in which Seligman et al. define and criticize it, the late 11th century was modern, that is, that like in ‘our’ modernity over its course there was an increasing emphasis on sincere modes of thought, to the point where ritual/*li* either was made part and parcel of totalizing, normative claims, or was sidelined in such thought models; in this way ritual/*li* was neutralized as a separate entity of concern and significance, and changed its value in the process, to being ascribed either a deeper meaning, or no meaning at all.

In fact, minus the explicit reference to modernity, and expressed in the form of the duality of *wen* and *dao* thanks to Peter Bol this phenomenon has for quite some time been part of the literature on this period. He argues that, as a general trend with fits and starts, the literary form (*wen*) and

¹⁴¹ See especially the chapter on Naitō Konan’s periodization of Chinese History, and the argument he made for the Tang-Song transition that purported to use general, universal criteria, which in itself was a normative statement; stripped of the term modernity and all its implications, these ideas have had a lasting influence on Song studies. However, that connection also highlights the fact that without an implicit idea of modernity, it would be hard to imagine the Tang-Song tradition as it is perceived today. Joshua A. Fogel, *Politics and Sinology. The Case of Naitō Konan 1866–1934*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984. p. 163-210, particularly p. 179-182, 205-210. For a more recent example of such a connection: Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule – The Song Transformation of China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. p. 276.

its diversity of expression over the 11th century was increasingly considered secondary or subordinate to the normative content (*dao*), leading to the failed attempt by Wang Anshi at introducing a curriculum from above that would unify the *shi*, and culminating in the initiators of the subsequent *daoxue* movement and their emphasis on the self.¹⁴² The exception to this trend, Su Shi – in Bol's words “the last great figure in the Sung to occupy a central role in both intellectual life and literary endeavor” – defines his *wen* as an independent entity, subject to constant changes, and not knowable as such, not even by himself;¹⁴³ in other words, for Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) good *wen* to some degree is and works independent of inner consciousness, and therefore by definition cannot be completely subject to sincerity.

Within this project there is no space to offer a comprehensive survey of Western arguments about sincerity, and of claims about the relationship between form and content; instead, and apart from what has been provided in *Ritual and its Consequences*, two references to concepts and thought models in this tradition have to suffice. One relevant thinker would be Hobbes, for whom Skinner has described an intellectual development along similar lines concerning the relative importance of form and content, if one allows for the slight differences in the terms used. According to Skinner's argument, Hobbes' philosophical outlook over his lifetime changes from a belief that an exposition of reason alone, without rhetorical embellishment, is enough to further the right cause, to a position that accepts and indeed emphasizes the need to supplement reason with the rhetorical means to support it and make it palatable and convincing for its audience.

¹⁴² See his concluding remarks: Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 335-338.

¹⁴³ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 297. Note that Bol still sees intellectual commonalities between Su and Cheng Yi, with his personal ethics (p. 298-299).

This change, in Skinner's opinion, is reflected in the change in style and argument from Hobbes' earlier writings, in which the thinker argues against rhetorical embellishment, to his *Leviathan*, which seems to make full use of the same rhetoric forms that he had criticized earlier. According to Skinner, this shift is closely connected to the trauma of the English Civil War, a historic event not just witnessed, but suffered by Hobbes, thus weakening his confidence in reason alone being able to win out in the public arena.¹⁴⁴ Note that this example also serves to highlight another important point of the framework: despite assuming a general and largely exclusive emphasis on sincere modes in 'modern' times, ritual and sincerity are not considered part of an evolution or teleology as such; in fact in this particular case the development within Hobbes' thinking takes place in the exact opposite direction to that which an evolutionary view would suggest.

Hobbes' question of how reasoned and exclusively rational a public discourse can and should be leads to the second point of reference in Western thinking: the concept of *Öffentlichkeit* as it was explained and discussed by Jürgen Habermas in his book *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. The noun encompasses a range of overlapping meanings, including 'the public', that is, the audience or participants, as well as the more abstract 'public sphere' where an act or discourse is imagined to 'take place', but it can also denote the public nature or status of such a discourse or act, something that in English can only clumsily be expressed as publicity (drawing on the French origin of that word, which Habermas also refers to) or 'publicness'.¹⁴⁵ As such, not just for

¹⁴⁴ Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. See especially the conclusion, p. 426-437.

¹⁴⁵ Note, for example the concept of "Öffentlichkeit herstellen", to 'create publicity'; the current meaning of this term denotes a change in connotation that is important for Habermas. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* [The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990. p. 55-56, 84-85.

Habermas 'öffentlich/public' becomes a qualitative statement, or even a normative one: in his narrative of the emergence, indeed, the evolution of the bourgeois public sphere in the West, Habermas differentiates between two kinds of publicness, a representative, largely functional and unidirectional one that in his view is characteristic of pre-modern, medieval societies, and a discursive, reasoning, and rational public sphere, the emergence of which marks the modern era.¹⁴⁶ It is when the audience becomes at least potential participants, when the act becomes a discourse, that the true public sphere is achieved. The skepticism towards any telos of modernity that Seligman et al. express in their essay on the "limits of sincerity" is directed against precisely the kind of narrative that Habermas offers in his work, a narrative and terminology that indeed is based on the belief that a "basic distinction exists between tradition and modernity".¹⁴⁷ In other words, Seligman et al. and Habermas stand on opposite ends in their answer to the question of modernity: the former imbue ritual acts and social convention as such with value, whereas the latter only sees them as an inhibiting factor preventing the public sphere from fulfilling its rational potential. On the other hand, this of course is why in terms of content, if not the exact terminology and certainly not in the verdict, the representative and discursive public spheres that Habermas talks about map very well onto our framework of ritual and sincerity, with the decisive difference being that within the framework coined by Seligman et al. there is no assumption that one of these terms is the morally better category, mutually exclusive, or represent a fundamental historical change between a pre-modern and a modern mode of behavior. It is only a logical consequence of the clear historic division that Habermas sees between a pre-modern mode

¹⁴⁶ Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). The third chapter discusses this at length, while p. 61-62 discusses the ritual nature of representative public; see p. 69-85 for the development of the bourgeois public sphere and its discursive/rational nature.

¹⁴⁷ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 179.

governed by convention and ritual, and the sincere, or – in his words – rational modernity, that he in his early work also denies any meaningful application of the latter concepts to other historical, by definition non-modern, contexts. The reason for this is that according to Habermas the existence of a discursive public sphere is tied closely to the historical development of a bourgeoisie and its social and political institutions, as well as ideas, in the West.¹⁴⁸ And yet, despite these limitations, maintained by Habermas himself, an attempt will be made here to make constructive and critical use of his intellectual project for this study, not as theory and analytic tool to take to and describe historic reality, but as a Western point of comparison with similar normative claims about the ability of the ‘public’ to come to the right decisions, as they were made during the debates of the 11th century. In other words, as normative claims, not as objective representations of historic realities, visions of public/*gong* discourse and opinion will serve as another indicator to show that thinkers during the 11th century in their acts and expressions indeed were edging towards modernity, at least as much as the examples of 18th- and 19th-century ‘public spheres’ that for Habermas are the epitome of bourgeois publicness. This attempt to revisit this issue seems all the more necessary due to common misreadings and abbreviations of Habermas’ theory by others in the China field, who have taken it solely as a tool of analysis of historical reality without considering, let alone questioning, the underlying assumptions.

¹⁴⁸ Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 51. Note that this is the original foreword. On the other hand in later statements Habermas, because of the absence of such a well established tradition in Germany, denies that the discursive public sphere is tied to a specific and continuous constitutional tradition and culture, such as the one in the US, but the limitation to so-called modern societies implicitly still prevails, as when he names “a rationalized lifeworld” (*rationalisierte Lebenswelt*) a precondition for the development of a bourgeois/civil society. Jürgen Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung: Beiträge zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts und des demokratischen Rechtsstaats* [Between facts and norms: contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998. p. 85-86, 449.

The problems that one encounters when using the concept of *Öffentlichkeit* as an analytic tool have their roots within the framework itself: on the surface it represents an intellectual attempt at coming to terms with the problem that rationality and reason seem to be largely absent from the political process and the public sphere of a modern democracy, but in its references to and criticism of specific newspapers and the political parties it at the same time is merely a somewhat veiled polemical statement against the political and social developments of the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany under Adenauer, and a mass-media culture that for the protesting students in the 1960s was epitomized by the tabloid *Bild-Zeitung*;¹⁴⁹ for Habermas, the problem is that the reality of contemporary political cultures fails to conform to its very own norms, because, after a process that he calls “re-feudalization” of the old bourgeois public, interests, opinions, and decisions made in private are merely represented in the public sphere, rather than being debated and decided there in a rational manner.¹⁵⁰ But what he later would call a tension between facts and norms starts even earlier, and in his own narrative: while excluding the possibility of application to other historical contexts in his introduction and emphasizing the specific historical context of the burgeoning bourgeois, early capitalist societies in Europe that made its development possible, Habermas himself at the same time draws connections to precursors of the public sphere in the Greek tradition; although hastening to assert that the ancient public is based on a different form of society than the bourgeois one, he still points to its

¹⁴⁹ In the 1968 edition, the German tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* is specifically mentioned when Habermas talks about the emergence of modern mass media. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. 3rd ed. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1968. p. 186-187. This explicit reference is excised in the new edition of 1990. In the late 1960s, Habermas and his work figured largely in discussions and proclamations of leftist student groups that also went against the tabloid and its publisher, Axel Springer. Jochen Staadt, Tobias Voigt, Stefan Wolle. *Feindbild Springer. Ein Verlag und seine Gegner* [Springer, the enemy: a publishing house and its adversaries]. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009. p. 90-91, 107, 135.

¹⁵⁰ Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 291-292, 336-238.

continuing normative power through the ages until today.¹⁵¹ All disclaimers notwithstanding, by insisting on the importance of the Greek case for his narrative, down to using words like ‘Bürger’ (variously translatable as bourgeois or citizen) to describe it, he already contradicts his assertion of the historic uniqueness of the modern bourgeois experience, while for the most part failing to acknowledge the issue of the largely imagined historical ties to Mediterranean antiquity. If a different historic experience makes it normatively irrelevant, why is the ancient Greek historical experience pertinent to the discussion of a historic phenomenon? On the other hand, if historical terms such as ‘Bürger’ are more flexible after all, what is the reason for categorically excluding phenomena such as a *shi* elite of China from the comparison? What should keep us from imagining a connection to them, that is, from acting ‘as if’ we had something in common? What, other than the outcome of modern mass democracy, made their experience of negotiating their economic and political place within the state and against it normatively less relevant than that of the Western bourgeois elite; an elite, which in the period that Habermas describes for the most part was living in monarchies, and without fail in states with their democratic institutions in a stage of development at best?¹⁵² However, when pointing to that outcome, it cannot be emphasized enough that Habermas considers the irrationality of the modern mass public to be a step backwards in normative terms. My point here is not to say that Greek ‘citizens’, Western

¹⁵¹ Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 56-57.

¹⁵² The fact that the economic aspect is largely absent from the sources about *shi* does not mean that it was not present. While it is possible that the *shi* elite in general was closer and more incorporated by the state than the European bourgeoisie, how do we reliably measure this independence, or ‘freedom’, across such a diverse historical experience as the different states of Europe and the US? Why would *shi* debates that this study will draw on – with their varying degrees of publicness – be less relevant than the gatherings and debates of European elites? According to a much-cited argument of Bol, despite their localized outlook and the slim chances of actually gaining office, the *shi* elite of Southern Song took part in the examinations because mere participation provided them with the status of the educated and literate (Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 190-191). It is therefore noteworthy that in Germany, in Habermas’ own account, education and academic occupations, and thus participation in state-legitimized educational institutions was part of the self-definition of the ‘Bildungsbürger’, the ‘educated bourgeoisie’ (Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 139).

bourgeois elites, and the *shi* of Song China are one and the same after all, or that there is no difference between these unique historical phenomena. Instead, the problem is that the strong identity that Habermas and many others see between Western historical facts and modern democratic norms bring with it the danger of circular reasoning that constantly changes from the normative to the factual realm and back to make its case, not only glossing over the inherent normative problems of the historical phenomena in the process, but also endangering the very norms that it is supposed to represent and foster. In other words, in his way Habermas makes a similar intellectual claim as Wang Anshi, namely that practical measures and empirical phenomena are and should be intricately connected to general norms and values, or conversely, that a bad outcome is a consequence of normative shortcomings. In the Western case, especially with regard to non-Western phenomena, a selective memory ensues, in which normatively good ‘facts’ of Western history are pitted against unsatisfactory phenomena in non-Western cases. Couched in different terms, as important as institutions may be, the question is if these are really at the heart of the ‘freedom’ and ‘rights’ that are such an intricate part of many a response to why the *shi* are not Bürger/citizens, making these differences objectively verifiable as such, or if it would be more fruitful to conceive of ‘freedom’ as a subjective tension between historical agents, in which one agent time and again, and collectively, negotiates its place both within and against the other, more abstract, or nominally more powerful entity. Seen from this perspective, freedom factually cannot exist separate from this struggle, and in fact recent developments appear to show that institutionalized freedom that is not constantly defended and reaffirmed becomes normatively weaker as well. As such, this critique may not be something new, or specific to Habermas, who stands here for many other 19th- and 20th-century thinkers that felt the need to define and redefine Western modernity as normatively better and historically specific; however,

given that the underlying assumptions appear to come up time and again in different guises, it is necessary to also time and again lay open all the problems with this project of imbuing historical facts with normative meaning, especially when using the terminology in a non-Western, pre-modern context.

Habermas' narrative is merely a good case in point: in the remainder of his book, he insists on what essentially are normative criteria ('rational', 'discursive') that decide whether it is the true or the false *historic* publicness. At the same time, this normative meaning of the historic experience prevents it from being testable against other historical contexts and phenomena, because the historical experience in other times and spaces will always be different in some ways, semantic and otherwise, allowing the claimant to focus on these differences to make the case. Thus, when a priori limiting the subject to the European historical context and tradition, while allowing for connections to antiquity, Habermas indeed implicitly points to a problem in his own thinking. By connecting the categories of normative content and historical fact with each other in such an intricate way, Habermas' original theory, at least in the form it takes in his first book, in many ways becomes a mere assertion, an assumption that the ideal, normatively correct publicness of modernity, however brief and limited to a narrow section of society, had existed, rather than a neutral, historical explanation of how and why it developed.¹⁵³ Notwithstanding the assertions of the author and the theorists of modernity that he discusses, no truly empirical reason is given why the contemporary problems with rationality that Habermas finds in the public sphere should not in some way or other have been present at every other moment in its

¹⁵³ Habermas in his 1990 foreword admits to historic deficits in this work, while insisting on its basic validity. Habermas, foreword to the 1990 edition of *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 13.

emergence, or why the cultural consumerism of the contemporary media public that he laments should not have equally been a factor in the early days of enlightened cultural production and literary discussion. This fact is somewhat obscured by the critical and thorough discussion of the theory of publicness, its assumed historical development, and the limits of its validity, but nevertheless remains the key problem. The description of a rational early-modern public sphere thus becomes a foil needed to criticize the present against a past that in spite of the pretence of its historicity remains a mere ideal state. Seen in this way, the difference between Habermas' ideal bourgeois public sphere and the idealization of antiquity that we will see spreading among 11th-century *shi* appears less pronounced: much like with the literati's epistemological problem of how to know ideal antiquity through imperfect textual tradition, for Habermas as well the central question of how one tests or conceptualizes reason and rationality in an empirical sense remains completely open in the historical narrative of *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, a fact that is all but corroborated by Habermas' later work, in which he specifically tried to fill these lacunae.¹⁵⁴ His later publication *Faktizität und Geltung* [*Between Facts and Norms*] builds on his earlier work on the public sphere and language, but for the most part turns away from the rational public sphere as a normative entity to make much more explicit use of the tension between the eponymous duality of facts and norms already implicitly present in his first book. These become the dialectic that provides the dynamic potential to create the reason and rationality on every plain that he applies it to, from society, public sphere, the rule of law, and democratic institutions,

¹⁵⁴ In fact, when saying that “Aus geschichtlichen Prozessen kann die Geschichtsphilosophie nur soviel Vernunft herauslesen, wie sie zuvor mit Hilfe teleologischer Begriffe hineingelegt hat,” he seems to recognize this very problem, although it is unclear if he himself would refer to his earlier work as historical philosophy, which “can only detect as much reason in historical processes as it has imbued in them beforehand with the help of teleological terms” (Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*, p. 16).

to communicative speech acts.¹⁵⁵ The latter now for him represent the nucleus of discursive rationality that in the medium of modern law interacts with and serves to stabilize the other planes.¹⁵⁶ With this dialectic, and in combination with the ‘linguistic turn’, Habermas feels able to incorporate into his coherent theoretical system the realities of a public sphere in modern mass democracies,¹⁵⁷ that is, the representative, acclamatory and, implicitly, irrational aspects of the modern public that in his pessimistic first work still were judged by him to constitute a regression of the public sphere into a pre-modern state of affairs, a regression for which he then felt unable to provide more than a rather tentative solution.¹⁵⁸ By contrast, in *Between Facts and Norms* he asserts that under the conditions of modern law and democracy it is in fact possible for this communicative reason to transcend and neutralize any particular interests of its participants and structure the lifeworld in a rational manner, not in the absolute sense of a universal truth, but time and again in a continuous and accumulative process.¹⁵⁹ In this way, as if opening up a Russian nesting doll to get to its undividable core, after recognizing and peeling away the layers of problems with pure reason that appear on different planes of a modern state and society by neutralizing them in his dialectic, Habermas locates rationality in the “linguistic telos of communication” and its potential to structure a rational lifeworld, a process that happens in the medium of language itself.¹⁶⁰ Despite all caveats, and the introduction of a duality to account for

¹⁵⁵ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 17-20, 24-45.

¹⁵⁶ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 19-20, 23.

¹⁵⁷ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 435-467.

¹⁵⁸ He points to the potential of sub-organizations, such as political parties, to provide the discursive sphere. Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 356-359.

¹⁵⁹ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 23-24, 17-20, 24-45.

¹⁶⁰ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 17-18.

problems, in the form of the assumed tendency of language to be rational there is therefore still a level where the good act is differentiated from the bad. While the locus of rationality is different, the historical teleology also remains present by way of the difference that Habermas posits between this rationalized lifeworld of modern times, and traditional knowledge that due to ceremonial communicative constraints inhibits rational discourse.¹⁶¹ Habermas' ideas at their core have not solved the problem that is probably not solvable and could be considered the original sin of modernity: on the one hand it at some level makes absolute, and ultimately normative distinctions, such as between traditional and modern, rational and irrational, representative (bad) publicness versus discursive (good, rational) public sphere, or in the case of *Between Facts and Norms*, a speech act that is conducive to the creation of a rational lifeworld and society, and one that is a mere unproductive social convention or guided by interest,¹⁶² and thus by definition unable to lead to the next stage of communicative reason. On the other hand its goal is always to connect these moral distinctions to the truth of a factual world and empirical phenomena, and incorporate them into a coherent, systematic view of the world as it truly works, worked, or could work. However, because the statement about the function and historicity of a given phenomenon always remains influenced by the moral project in the background, this leads to the creation of what ultimately is also a prejudiced, exclusive, and moral world view that, some connections notwithstanding, on the whole only presumes to be grounded in empirical facts. Therefore, traditional, non-Western societies cannot be comparable to the modern situation; a ritual that has no rational meaning is unproductive in a modern context; a speech act that does not fulfill the criterion of being entered into in good faith and without strategic interest cannot

¹⁶¹ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 40.

¹⁶² Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 31, 34, 43.

perform the integrative, rationalizing function that Habermas ascribes to language. Thus, at the heart of Habermas' project is the claim that only sincerity can lead to a positive, constructive outcome, whereas forms of insincerity will be neutralized by different mechanisms in his system.¹⁶³

All caveats notwithstanding, for a modernist Habermas is remarkably critical about the problems of modernity, as represented by modern mass democracy, and in fact he feels the need to resort to ascribing important functions within his later model to a “performative attitude” and “counterfactual assumptions”.¹⁶⁴ However, he and, if Seligman et al. are correct, the modern project as a whole still suffer from the problem of being unable to acknowledge, and to accept in all its consequences that it is in fact mostly an intellectual project, an assertion, and yes, a subjunctive ‘as if’, having convinced itself about its own uniqueness. This conviction is powerful indeed, and without doubt had and continues to have innumerable and positive impacts on material reality, but remains impossible to grasp in its entirety and prove, let alone put systematically into practice, on an empirical level. It is only through accepting that it is an intellectual project that we can start to compare it with the experience of 11th-century China, and look at what consequences similar claims had back then, which is what we will attempt here in this study.

The assumption prevalent in our times about the uniqueness of modernity has far reaching consequences: much like in the world of traditional knowledge that Habermas describes and

¹⁶³ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 43, 56-57.

¹⁶⁴ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 18, 33.

juxtaposes with the rational lifeworld of modernity, and contrary to his claims that there exists fundamental, “communicative” fluidity of knowledge and tradition in the latter,¹⁶⁵ Habermas’ narrative itself shows that the core beliefs of modernity remain outside of the scope of discussion. According to these core beliefs there exists a fundamental divide between pre-modern and modern; facts and norms, as well as the phenomena of the empirical and social world can be, in fact can *only* be connected and discussed meaningfully in a rational, objective fashion; this diminishes his claim on being able to reflect a relative empirical reality, and more importantly, if only implicitly, continues the 19th-century colonialist and modernist credo that non-Western societies need to divest themselves of their own historic experience, because it is useless to the project in normative terms. More generally, it points to problems with another one of these core beliefs, namely that in the absolute necessity for the scholar to differentiate between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between disinterested observer and the object of study; supposedly the objective, disinterested gaze is the only way of getting to ‘the bottom’ of things, and enables us to discuss both ‘their’ world and ‘their’ view of the world. The problem is that, in the absence of any truly objective category to assess the normative side of, for example, a term such as ‘public’, the assumption of such an objective assessment is revealed as a subjunctive; in other words, without stating so, Habermas is acting ‘as if’ there was an absolute difference between the pre-modern and the modern, between the Western and the non-Western experience, between the representative and the discursive public, and by way of this assumption he structures his worldview. Now, Seligman et al. only express it indirectly and in passing,¹⁶⁶ but one consequence of their call for more conscious appreciation of the subjunctive, and for leaving the

¹⁶⁵ Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*. p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 113-114.

ambiguous nature of boundaries in place, is to question the primacy of the objective perspective in academic endeavors, and to instead allow for another, equally valid form of academic discourse: rather than differentiating between ‘us’ and ‘them’, by, for example, a priori assuming and defining the fundamental differences in the historical experience, or between terms such as ritual and *li*, the historian takes the perspective ‘as if’ the historical experience was the same or comparable, and ‘as if’ terms such as *li* and ritual had a common, overlapping, universal meaning. In other words, he puts himself in the shoes of the ‘other’, he takes the perspective of ‘we’, rather than ‘us and them’. Now, in principle these two perspectives are both equally valid, both have their downsides, and at the end of the day cannot overcome the fundamental fragmentation of a complex historical reality. Yet, if the analysis of Seligman et al. is correct we are currently in a situation in which there is an overemphasis of the divisive perspective; among other problems, in its construction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ this perspective hides important information about both sides of the assumed divide. On the other hand, a study such as this one, which is structured by the inclusive perspective of ‘we’ will make this information about both modernity and the 11th century accessible and discursive again, a point that we will revisit and expound on shortly.

The limitations imposed by Habermas himself notwithstanding, the theory of public sphere has been applied to and discussed extensively for the Chinese case, reflecting the field’s continuing fascination with comparative questions. It is interesting to note that most of the authors, while acknowledging the fact in their opening remarks, in their own analysis still largely ignore that Habermas, especially in his first book, on the one hand proposes a predominantly normative model, and on the other is quite critical of contemporary modernity, if in a way that still adheres to its basic assumptions. In *Strukturwandel und Öffentlichkeit*, it is precisely the broadening of

the electoral base to include non-bourgeois classes, mass media, and the workings of party-democracy – in other words, the basic features of modern democracies taken for granted by most appliers of Habermas’ theory – that cause the problem and “re-feudalize” the public sphere and political culture. Arif Dirlik has pointed to the normative thrust of the concept and the critical nature of Habermas’ original theory,¹⁶⁷ and he goes on to lament the reductionism with which the concept is used in the Chinese case,¹⁶⁸ while others use it both uncritically and without paying much real attention to the criticism of it.¹⁶⁹ For obvious reasons this application was usually limited to late Qing and the 20th century, however, Christian Meyer has also applied the terminology of the two different public spheres as an analytic tool to the discourse about ritual in 11th-century China,¹⁷⁰ noting that, while a ‘modern’ public sphere indeed was not present at the

¹⁶⁷ Although Philip Huang also notes that Habermas is a “moral-political” philosopher, by juxtaposing that realization with Habermas’ “sociologist-historian” intention it still predominantly remains an analytic category for him, (Philip C.C. Huang, “‘Public Sphere’/‘Civil Society’ in China?: The Third Realm Between State and Society.” *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 216-240. p. 218-219), albeit one whose usefulness he finds questionable, precisely because of the ambiguities and different meanings it contained (p. 224); Huang criticizes an author whose normative agenda is too ostentatious in his view, and calls for distancing oneself from these tendencies, however admirable they may be (p. 222-223). However, in his attempt neutralize the terminology by proposing a “third realm” between state and society for use by Chinese historians (p. 224-225), it remains questionable if such a separation of normative from factual content is possible when the original idea, and in fact the whole enterprise, is so fraught with the former. Another problem with this “third realm” is that this attempt to remove the uncertainty and ambiguity of the state/society duality is missing the point that this duality almost amounts to its own uncertainty principle, which is precisely that the state-society divide hardly ever is clearly definable. This uncertainty should be retained and highlighted, rather than hidden in just another definition purporting to be a more objective rendition of reality, which, however, just opens up more questions and ambiguities (See Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 113-114).

¹⁶⁸ Arif Dirlik, “Civil Society/Public Sphere in Modern China: As Critical Concepts versus Heralds of Bourgeois Modernity.” *Chinese Social Sciences Quarterly* 中國社會科學季刊 4 (Summer 1993). p. 10-17. p. 10, 12-13.

¹⁶⁹ Despite the fact that Rowe explicitly points to the critical nature of Habermas’ book in his review of it, what are the consequences of this for our analysis? William Rowe, “The Public Sphere in Modern China.” *Modern China* 16:3 (Jul. 1990). p. 309-329.

¹⁷⁰ Meyer claims that simply by dropping the word bourgeois the term “discursive public” becomes applicable to the Chinese context (Christian Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen am Hof der nördlichen Song-Dynastie (1034–1093): Zwischen Ritengelehrsamkeit, Machtkampf und intellektuellen Bewegungen* [Debates about rites at the court of the Northern Song Dynasty]. Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica, 2008. p. 406), but it seems not quite adequate to make this leap without providing more justification and explanation, given that the decisive point is that Habermas ties the appearance of this “good” kind of public to the appearance of institutions and social formations, but also intellectual

time, there is both a representative and a discursive/reasoning aspect to the contemporary discussions about ritual.¹⁷¹ Despite his acknowledgement that this represents a departure from the limitations Habermas proposes in his preface, Meyer fails to fully realize and make explicit the implications of his findings for the original theory, because a discursive public sphere in a pre-modern, non-Western context, whether or not fully developed, should create serious doubts about the entire concept of discursive public sphere as part of the historical telos of a modernity-tradition divide, at least in the exclusiveness that Habermas adheres to.¹⁷²

Likewise, the various studies concerning the historical reality of public spheres in late Qing in fact seem to show one thing: that the categorical distinctions of Habermas need to be questioned for the Western case, precisely because, as Arif Dirlik has pointed out for the terminology, “the terms, in other words, were not merely descriptive but prescriptive: terms of a discourse that sought to produce its object...”; they are not “merely categories of sociological and historical analysis”.¹⁷³ Instead, however, the authors of the studies that were at the beginning of the debate in the nineties, as well as their critics, remain stuck in historical-empirical discussions of whether or not China had “de-facto” public spheres independent of the state at the time, and whether or not it is possible to find analogies in the accompanying historical institutions, phenomena and

developments of the time, phenomena such as capitalism, the modern state, and the press that are intricately tied to modernity (Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 28-41); Habermas not just implicitly denies any discursive nature of the pre-modern kind of publicness when he declares the public reasoning as being without historical precedent (Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 42).

¹⁷¹ Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen*. p. 408, 415.

¹⁷² However, the way Meyer makes his point, by pointing to the existence of two coeval hierarchies, a feudal and an administrative one, appears a bit indecisive to be entirely convincing (Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen*. p. 409-410), and leaves out the question of rationality that is so intricately tied to the public sphere (see above).

¹⁷³ Arif Dirlik, “Civil Society/Public Sphere.” p. 12, 13.

semantics in the Chinese context.¹⁷⁴ The attempt by proponents to divest the Chinese ‘public spheres’ from the term ‘civil society’,¹⁷⁵ and thereby to deprive the concept of its Eurocentric, normative content must remain futile, since Habermas himself does not deny that non-rational, representative public spheres existed in other times and spaces; however, for him it is the bourgeois public sphere itself, made up by the bourgeois class, which possesses normative value as the locus of rational opinion- and decision-making. By the same token, most discussants conveniently forget that with what has been translated as ‘civil society’ – the phenomenon connected to the rational public sphere – Habermas actually always means ‘bürgerliche Gesellschaft’, that is, the bourgeois society, and not the modern mass democracy that the term ‘civil society’ is most commonly connected to (possibly a slight difficulty with translation).¹⁷⁶ This leads to the curious phenomenon that, due to practical contemporary limitations imposed by education, economic means, status, and of course gender, Habermas’ own public sphere, while in theory open to the general public, in practice is limited to a rather small circle that is not so different from the literati of the 11th century; to reiterate once again, when it becomes open in practice as well as in theory, Habermas posits a decline in its rationality. As Rankin has pointed

¹⁷⁴ Two authors initiated the discussion with their books: William Rowe, *Hankow, vol. 1: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City; vol. 2: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796–1895*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984, 1989. Mary B. Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865–1911*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986.

¹⁷⁵ Both Rowe and Rankin make that proposition, apparently in reaction to the criticism. William Rowe, “The Problem of ‘Civil Society’ in Late Imperial China.” *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 138-155. p. 142. The remainder of the article discusses separate “socio-economic features”, which, however, in most cases equally can be charged with normative meanings. Mary Rankin, “Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere.” *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 158-182.

¹⁷⁶ The translator of the English edition points to this difficulty. Thomas Bauer, “Translator’s Note,” in: Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991 (first paperback edition). p. xv.

out, when that concept is applied it mostly is done in absolute terms,¹⁷⁷ which to me seems to be particularly the case when applying it to a non-Western context. However, as the above discussion of Habermas' original argument and its subsequent expansion should have shown, it is next to impossible to get a firm, empirical grasp on something as elusive as public sphere and civil society even in the diverse Western historical context. Therefore, an inquiry that unquestioningly subjects itself to what ultimately must remain normative rather than historical or empirical categories has even less chance of winning the argument than is the case for empirically better ascertainable phenomena such as the economic side of the "great divergence".¹⁷⁸ It is an indicator of the strong hold that these normative claims have even on academics trying to use the terminology more inclusively by applying it to other historical contexts that there always seems to be some attempt at qualification in their argument as to how 'public' the public sphere was; from Meyer to Rowe and Rankin, it is always made clear that this is a relative statement about some aspects in Chinese history that appear similar, dooming their project from the start. However, their failure is not necessarily due to critics like Wakeman having the better arguments when they attack the proposed evidence one by one,¹⁷⁹ but occurs precisely because these terms were originally anything but an analytical tool in any context, and moreover are tied to beliefs about historical uniqueness that are ingrained in Western scholars on both sides of the debate. Applying these terms as relative measurements outside of the semantic and historical environment they were created in makes it easy for Wakeman and others to

¹⁷⁷ Rankin, "Some observations." p. 178-179.

¹⁷⁸ Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

¹⁷⁹ Frederic Wakeman, "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture." *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 108-138.

dismiss the proposal on historical grounds, without questioning the categories themselves, and without necessarily requiring any consciousness of one's own normative stake in it. The historical experience is different, therefore it cannot be comparable. Thus, within this framework of absolutes, there can be no such thing as a bit of public sphere or civil society elsewhere, a thinking that *ipso facto* excludes non-Western traditions from contributing anything useful to modernity, when in fact even the contribution of *the* Western tradition is selective and diverse, and can only become unified and unique in a subjunctive act 'as if'.

Due to these problems, the only way of making good use of Habermas in a comparative context is to treat his work not as theory, or description of reality, but as an example *pars pro toto* of the project and idea of modernity as a whole, a project that fundamentally is one of moral and social renewal, of making the world a better, more sincere place in the face of a perceived crisis. Simply put, Habermas' relevance to our study of the 11th century only becomes apparent when divesting him of his normative hold over historic reality, thereby limiting him to the role of a thinker who turns to history, language, and the concept of a public *constituted by his own elite class* to describe and attempt to solve the crisis of his day. In other words, from this perspective there is common ground between the historical experience of Habermas and his theorists of the bourgeois public sphere, and that of the *shi* of the 11th century making claims about *gong* 公, *wen* 文, and *gu* 古 – enough common ground for the assumption that the historical experience was indeed comparable. Put differently, if we are serious about comparative approaches, the first step is to deprive the terms of their implicit normative meaning for us, not by using different terms that make them appear neutral, but by making these normative implications and assumptions discursive; the reason why the framework discussed by Seligman et al. is directly

suitable for a comparative project is because it discusses and frames the historic categories and claims of modernity in a way that deprives them of the inherently normative, and thus historically exclusive implications that make it difficult to compare in a meaningful way otherwise.¹⁸⁰ With respect to *Öffentlichkeit* or public sphere, we likewise can only be successful when treating these terms as the mere assertion that they are, not just for Habermas and the thinkers he discusses, but by nature of the terms themselves, which never can in fact achieve the all-encompassing, rational promise that they make. In this way, the term finally does become usable to increase our understanding of the 11th century; by looking at how the thinkers in this period used the concept of public/*gong* in all its different representations, we will see another change between the thought of the *qingli* protagonists and that of their opponents in *puyi*, from the public being mostly an audience and a conduit for the dissemination of literati values and a tool for the emperor to make the right decisions, to the claim that public opinion actually provided the best decision in the *puyi* question. By the same token, when we use the term ‘public’ in this study, we are less concerned with a qualitative assessment of the actual extent of this public sphere, and will only rarely, and in the broadest sense, make a reference to ‘how public’ an act or proclamation ‘actually’ was; for our purposes, it fulfills the condition of being considered ‘public’ if an act or proclamation happened in a court audience, was submitted through the proper channels for memorials and official documents, or if a letter or act was included into the transmitted historical record.

¹⁸⁰ Seligman, Puett et al. do have a stated normative goal (Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 10), but they are careful not to ascribe absolute normative superiority to any of the concepts they discuss. With their discussion of “ritual and sincerity” they fulfill a demand to create general, yet historically meaningful tensions to make human historical experience comparable. This demand is formulated in Michael Puett, *To Become a God: cosmology, sacrifice, and self-divinization in early China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. p. 322.

To summarize, this introduction has served several purposes: firstly, it exposed a problem in the way we currently conceive of the factionalism of the 11th century, namely with the image in our mind of relatively firm associations based on equally firm and absolute factors such as interests, ideas, and social connections; according to this view the factional clash then happened between these associations, or when the leadership of these firm groups changed. This concept of factions, however, is plagued with many problems, mostly because it does not fit the evidence very well, which exposes whatever groups existed as much more volatile and ambiguous, in a way that does not lend itself to a description in absolute terms of ‘in’ or ‘out’, ‘friend’ or ‘enemy’, etc. Instead, we propose to reassemble the social by leaving all these ambiguities in place, by way of the idea of ‘ritual’ discussed by Seligman et al., which in every human community serves to make connections that are imagined, subjunctive, temporary, and as such not necessarily guided by empirically knowable factors and absolute terms. The exchange between the two foremost opponents during the *xining* reform, Wang Anshi and Sima Guang, has served as a case in point, and led us to argue that even such a very temporary relationship based on ritual, brought about by calling the opponent a ‘good man’, is significant and must be recognized as such, and cannot be dismissed because it seems insincere for Sima Guang to affirm a relationship at this point, given the seemingly unambiguous enmity between the two that other sources show for this period.

Secondly, therefore, we have introduced a framework that juxtaposes ritual and sincerity, as discussed by Seligman et al., and have laid open the far-reaching implications that this framework has for our study. We have seen that first and foremost, Seligman et al.’s critique is directed at ‘us’, arguing that we must take ritual seriously on its own terms, and accept

boundaries as ambiguous and permeable, including the one between pre-modern and modern, which in fact merely consists of the relative predominance of sincere modes of thought in our times. Accordingly, the use here of Seligmann et al. as theory in fact is first and foremost applied to ‘our’ side of the argument, in that it exhorts us to reconsider the significance of ritual and ambiguity in human experience, and especially in social relationships; it is only the second step to attempt to show that this vision of ritual was present in contemporary Northern Song thinking, and how it relates to the more established concept of *wen*, literary form, as we have done in this introduction. In this way, with regard to the 11th century we merely use Seligman et al. as point of departure, trying to verify their prediction that similar visions of ritual/*li* can be found at other times, and in other cultures. It will be the goal of Part I to expound on this, and to discuss the social and political implications of this vision of ritual. However, even the second step of this study is merely inspired by Seligman et al.’s analysis of the problems with modernity, and does not actually amount to an application of their theory to the 11th century; instead, we attempt to show that, similarly to what they say about our modernity, actors in the 11th century increasingly started to act and think exclusively in terms of the sincere mode, and relegated ritual to a subordinate position in a larger normative framework. Part II will illustrate this development, and discuss the consequences that it had for political culture and elite cohesion. In fact we will see that Ouyang Xiu criticized the problems of this vision of ritual in very similar terms to Seligman et al.; the work of the latter merely allows us to see these things more clearly by challenging our own preconceptions. In this way, we break down the terminological boundaries between ritual and *li*, between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and replace the ostensibly observing perspective that a differentiation between ‘*li*’ and ‘ritual’ would entail with a more inclusive one for structuring this study; by assuming that there is a shared significance of *li* and ritual we put

ourselves in ‘their’ shoes, and in this way can improve and enlarge our knowledge both of how ‘we’ (that is, we *and* they) see the world *and* how it is. Differentiations such as *emic* and *etic*, ‘us’ and ‘them’ thus lose their significance. By the same token, a term such as *Öffentlichkeit* or publicness must be stripped of its implicit normative meaning and empirical pretence to be of use for these purposes, which we have done in our discussion of Habermas’ work on this topic.

The ultimate consequence of this is to argue and show that, at least according to the definition of Seligman et al., late 11th-century thinkers were modern, too, because they increasingly conceived of their world as ultimately knowable and structured by absolute, general principles, if each in their own, unique ways. The argument is not that Habermas and Wang Anshi are the same in their historically specific calls for reforming their world according to their ideals, but that they made comparable claims about being able to know exactly what the general problem was and how to solve it. As we shall see, one phenomenon that reflects that change is the fact that in the 11th century the dualities used by earlier thinkers to express and decide normative predicaments on an individual, situational basis gave way to the claim that one universal principle led to one correct decision in a given situation. For elite social cohesion, this worldview had divisive consequences, because the attempt to apply this heuristic to the social realm, and to define relationships in exclusive terms of good and bad, ‘us’ and ‘them’, and according to firm ideologies and principles, caused them to become more unstable and volatile than they had been before, when ritual and its inherent ambiguities had been an implicitly or explicitly accepted part of social relationships. The problem was that doing away with these ambiguities, and making relationships more sincere, in fact led to the exact opposite of the desired outcome: the ‘as if’ of shared interests and ideas was eclipsed by the ‘as is’ of hierarchies and absolute ideological

conformity, a demand for conformity that was unfit to create a community of *shi*, as opposed to forging temporary relationships between individual actors. We will argue that this is why Wang Anshi, and in fact late 11th-century literati as a whole were unable to fulfill the promise of social unity that they had made, and instead with their factionalism contributed to Northern Song's descent into social disruption, chaos, and its downfall, just as Seligman et al. predict for overbearing sincerity claims.

Part I: With malice toward none? The *qingli* ‘faction of good men’ and their struggle for public recognition, 1027–1045

Taking Seligman et al. as a starting point, the previous chapter introduced a duality of ritual and sincere modes of thought, modes that, as we will claim, in their individual, historical manifestations of the 11th century have profound implications for how thinkers faced with a fragmented world would frame their response, whether that response be within the political, the social, or the literary-intellectual realm. However, it should be made clear that virtually all thinkers we will discuss considered the state of affairs in the 11th century to be fragmented of sorts, that is to say, in their view there was a crisis; the difference was whether or not they thought one could undo the crisis by un-fragmenting the world in the here and now, by offering a unified, coherent response to it, or if the crisis could only be mitigated and dealt with case by case, step by step, without being immediately able to change the basic fact that theirs was still a fragmented world that lacked any systematic coherence other than the imagined one provided by ritual. In other words, the difference between the two world views also was an idea about what the world could be in the here and now. The argument to be made in this dissertation, in brief, is that this intellectual development from one view and approach to the other in turn would have profound consequences for how their 11th-century world became, and it will be the topic of the second part to show how the increasing radicalism that this development entailed had a divisive effect on social cohesion and political culture. In order to establish a baseline of how the world could look when important literati predominantly followed the second, relatively moderate worldview, we will look through this intellectual background at a group of literati that by historiography are considered predecessors to Wang Anshi, namely those men who would

become the proponents of the *qingli* reform from 1043–1045. That is, based on their ruminations about ritual, their political proclamations and actions, we will try to define their particular response to the crisis they perceived as going on in the 11th century, while including the choices they made in their political and social relationships in this scope wherever it seems relevant. Furthermore, we have expanded the duality of ritual and sincerity by introducing the concept of the public, or *Öffentlichkeit*, that takes a pivotal role first in the analysis, and implicitly in the normative solution to the modern crisis offered in the early work of Habermas, whose narrative and assertions time and again will serve as implicit or explicit comparison to similar propositions brought forth in the 11th century. As we will see, the *qingli* protagonists frequently talked about the advantages of public debate and public court proceedings, or the good public reputation that a good man by rights should have and use for his purposes; in this way they would lay the ground for public/*gong* to be an important and often-used term henceforth; at the same time they refrained from ascribing to the public opinion the function of making the correct decision in a given situation, it remains a backdrop and conduit, not the locus of decision-making.

Judging by what they offered in their famous ten-point program proclaimed in 9/1043, the group around Fan Zhongyan aimed at re-forming officialdom, as well as at improving the situation of the state's finances and the readiness of the army, a program that at first glance bears a lot of resemblance to what Wang Anshi would propose a generation later.¹⁸¹ But even aside from whatever superficial similarities there may be in their programs, it has been pointed out that the *qingli* reformers and Wang Anshi shared the idea of activist (*youwei*) solutions to the problems

¹⁸¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3431-3444.

of the world.¹⁸² As opposed to the major reform promoted by Wang, Fan Zhongyan's own attempt (1043–1045) consequently has been dubbed the 'minor reform', also known by the name *qingli* reform, for the reign-period *qingli* 慶曆 (1041–1048) during which it took place. Following their defeat and resignations in 1045, *qingli* reformers, among them especially Ouyang Xiu, acted as recommender for both Wang Anshi, and some of his major opponents. And yet, the fact that those *qingli* reformers who were still alive in the *xining*-period were also among the most well-known and outspoken critics of the measures implemented by Wang Anshi, shows that the connection is not without tension. It is precisely this tension between outward similarities to *xining*, both in terms of concrete measures and the general activist attitude, and their later criticism of the *xining* reforms, that makes the case of the *qingli* reformers the ideal start and point of reference to aid in our understanding of the the *xining* reforms and the factional strife that accompanied them. To make matters more complicated, shortly before Wang Anshi's rise to eminent positions the so-called *puyi* ritual debate pitted men against each other in a fierce dispute, men who had previously been socially connected during and after *qingli*, and who would apparently reunite again in their opposition to Wang Anshi's reforms. In fact, even during the *qingli* reforms themselves we see diverse interests and ideas at play, as well as quite frank criticism of the reform being offered from within what supposedly was the reform camp. Once again we see that the image of neat and long-term factional divides does not reflect the record of diverse associations and seemingly contradictory political actions. In order to shed light on this complexity, rather than focusing on the reform measures themselves in this part, that is, *what* they tried to implement in 1043, we instead will look much closer at *how* the *qingli* reformers

¹⁸² Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. See p. 169-170 for *qingli* activism, p. 176 for the link between the two efforts to establish an activist policy, and p. 213-214 for Wang Anshi's activism.

argued their case and promoted their project in the run up to and during the period in which they occupied influential positions, all the while paying specific attention to how and under what circumstances they defined and acted out their relationship with each other and with their opponents. What were the areas that they agreed on? What did they disagree about, and how did they deal with these disagreements within the political group, as well as without?

For the purposes of this chapter, the *qingli* reform group will be called a ‘faction of good men’, or simply ‘good men’ (*junzi* 君子), mainly because that was what two of their main representatives, Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu, called themselves implicitly in the course of a famous event, when in response to a question posed by Emperor Renzong the former in person and the latter in writing asserted that there were indeed beneficial factions, composed of such ‘good men’, in court politics.¹⁸³ However, even before that the concept of good and bad factions, or men, had been a constant in the political statements of the *qingli* ‘good men’, starting with a letter by Fan Zhongyan to a mentor,¹⁸⁴ and reiterated by a considerable number of officials in their calls on the emperor to take a stand and in his personnel decisions differentiate clearly between the two sides. While Ouyang Xiu writing to Gao Ruona that he was “not a good man” is an extreme case,¹⁸⁵ the normative, divisive meaning of this differentiation into ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘good men’ and inferior ones, is readily apparent, as discussed in the introduction and by Levine, and indeed stood for a factional agenda that attempted to support certain people and exclude others, and in this way streamline officialdom according to the ideals of the self declared

¹⁸³ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3580-3582.

¹⁸⁴ QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 291.

¹⁸⁵ Letter to Gao Ruona: QSW. vol. 33, j. 698, p. 82-84.

‘good/superior men’.¹⁸⁶ And yet, for the early 11th century we will see on second glance that the term could be used in an inclusive way as well, when ‘good men’ recognized others as ‘good’ who strictly speaking did not have much in common, or in fact had been on the receiving end of a political argument at an earlier time. Drawing on the case of Sima Guang’s letter to Wang Anshi, where its subjunctive nature was most apparent, in the introduction we have included this kind of subjunctive act ‘as if’ the addressee was a part of the group of good men in our broad definition of ritual. Here we will finally see that this kind of social ritual indeed had the potential to be significant beyond the immediate exchange itself. Some readers might object to using a self-description as general and undefined as this in an analytic fashion; nevertheless, it is precisely this lack of absolute definition that will allow us to outline the social relationships of this group inside and outside of the political arena in all their contradiction and ambiguity; in fact we will see over the course of the narrative that, apart from the four literati central to the *qingli*

¹⁸⁶ Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 75. The *qingli* good men did not just attack others for factionalism, in fact there were a number of literati coming out in support of Fan when he was dismissed in 1036, some going as far as Yin Zhu, who declared publicly that he should be dismissed if Fan indeed was a factionalist, because he had associated himself with him (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2786). Other examples of support for Fan are Yu Jing (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2785-2786), Ouyang Xiu (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2786-2787), and Su Shunqin (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2788-2789). There were also literati who publicly circulated poems in support, thus for all intents and purposes declaring their allegiance, such as Cai Xiang lamenting the ousting of wise men in 1036, and celebrating the rise of the “wise men” to power in 1043 SS. vol. 30, j. 320, p. 10397; Shi Jie in 1043 (SS. vol. 37, j. 432, p. 12834-12836). In addition, there are more ‘private’ anecdotes of similar nature, such as about the rather unknown Wang Zhi, member of an established family of officials, who supposedly was the only one socializing with Fan privately, bringing alcohol, after the latter had been exiled, presumably after 1036, and at a time when the official regulations to curb factionalism were still in full force. When being reprimanded by someone, he supposedly replied that “Fan is a sage, were I to be able to become [a member of his] faction, that would be fortuitous indeed.” SS. vol. 26, j. 269, p. 9244-5. Note that Fan Zhongyan himself wrote the epitaph for Wang Zhi, calling him a ‘good person’ *shanren* 善人, mentioning a similar episode involving a ‘friend’ of Wang Zhi ousted for speaking up, probably Fan himself, who unsuccessfully tried to prevent Wang Zhi from exposing himself by seeing him off publicly. Wang Zhi’s daughter married Fan’s son Chunren, and the epitaph mentions other instances where ‘good men’, Han Qi and Fu Bi, recommended Wang. Wang was of an established family of high officials and chancellors (QSW. vol. 19, j. 389, p. 47-51). These cases provide evidence against Ari Levine’s argument (Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 13, 27). Levine asserts that there are only two cases of literati publicly declaring themselves to be part of a faction, Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu in 1044. It seems to me that limiting oneself to the use of the actual words *wudang* 吾黨, *dang* 黨, or *pengdang* 朋黨, can be misleading, when in many cases it was merely implied that the writer of a given letter or memorial was counting himself in when talking about the ‘right’ kind of people. The other problem is that the line between public and private is not all that clear; while the genre of memorials in theory is more geared towards the public than a letter, as we shall see below, ‘private’ letters could be meant to have a public impact.

reform effort, that is, Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi, Fu Bi, and Ouyang Xiu, the intellectual, political, and social manifestations of the ‘good men’ are not quite the same or congruent over time: literati who clearly were part of the exchange of ideas taking place before the *qingli*-era found themselves purposefully excluded from the political association that promoted the reforms in the political arena. Social connections such as marriage ties, and even recommendation, at times failed to amount to shared intellectual goals, or did not translate into unambiguous mutual support in the political sphere. Likewise, rather substantial political support could be offered despite major intellectual differences, or intellectual indifference.¹⁸⁷ For reasons of space and time, the discussion of this aspect must remain anecdotal, but it will back up the point made earlier against all too static, absolute definitions of social associations or political factions, even in a case such as this where a faction was self-declared and functioning: because despite all these qualifications, there can be no doubt that the ‘good men’ in their political manifestation were a rather effective association that managed to maintain sufficient coherence, not just in the face of political defeat, but also through differences of theory and ideas,¹⁸⁸ as well as open disagreements among themselves about their concrete reform measures; in its core group, namely Ouyang Xiu, Fu Bi, and Han Qi (Fan Zhongyan died in 1052), this association exercised considerable influence for several decades, returning to high positions at court in the mid to late 1050s, although Fu Bi would eventually break with his former associates. Given the lack of coherence within the core members of the *xining* ‘faction’, this is one more reason why a

¹⁸⁷ This is alluding to the case of Zhang Fangping, discussed later, who as co-signatory supported one of the reform measures in a memorial, but distanced himself from the *qingli* ideas later.

¹⁸⁸ Douglas Skonicki concludes that there was a diversity of ideas on cosmology that the *qingli* proponents employed in their public political statements, at times the same literatus could offer different arguments, depending on the audience and circumstances. He concludes that “theoretical consistency was not a primary concern” for *guwen* thinkers. Douglas Skonicki, “Employing the Right Kind of Men: The Role of Cosmological Argumentation in the Qingli Reforms.” *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* 38 (2008). p. 39-98. p. 97.

comparison to the *qingli* case appears fruitful, to establish a base-line of how a functioning political association could be forged. The argument in this part will be that the successful use of ritual subjunctive acts, such as acting ‘as if’ the addressee were part of the ‘good men’, made all the difference between the ability to maintain relative coherence among early reform proponents during *qingli* and after, and the failure to do so later on. It is precisely the fact that this or similar terms are awfully general, undefined, and not really prejudiced in any concrete direction, be it geographical, ideological, or social, that made them suitable for the inclusive, ritual function that it could take, because it was this ambiguity, creating the potential that it could be true, that made the imagined world plausible enough to become significant beyond these exchanges; again, the problem with Sima Guang’s letter was that the subjunctive ‘as if’ was hemmed in by the proclamation of his harsh critique, leaving no room for any such ambiguity. For ritual to be successful and significant, it is not a precondition that one is always aware of its significance, yet, Seligman et al. posit that awareness of this significance was present in diverse traditions and cultures; therefore, this framework applies to both the historic phenomenon of ritual as such, and the views on ritual expressed by thinkers in the period. Accordingly, here we will also show that at least some *qingli* protagonists in fact consciously and systematically used *and* talked about ritual in this inclusive way. Before turning to the narrative of the political ups and downs of this group between 1030 and 1045, an overview of the ideas of a selection of ‘good men’ on ritual is therefore in order as a first step, with a special focus on their thoughts about its role in society.

Chapter 1. Visions of ritual and its potential to regulate and connect different entities

The following excerpt from a letter (1030) by Fan Zhongyan to “the current chancellor(s)”, calling for an overhaul of the aims of the examination system serves to provide a first glimpse at his idea of ritual, but mainly will be an opportunity to review his version of the *guwen* argument, and the epistemological problem behind it, and juxtapose the views of the ‘good men’ on ritual with Fan’s thoughts on literary culture. After first making the well-known claim about the ideal state that had existed in antiquity, he goes on to point to the classics as the source for guidance:

Surely the language of the laws and regulations of the sages is preserved in the Book of Documents, the portents of peace and peril are preserved in the Book of Changes, the reflections on successes and failures are in the Book of Songs, the debates of right or wrong are preserved in the Spring and Autumn, the ‘system’ of all under heaven is preserved in the Book of Rituals, the emotional dispositions of the people are preserved in the Classic of Music. Therefore people whose talent and wisdom is extraordinary immerse themselves in the six classics, and then are able to make a habit of the language of the laws and regulations, observe the portents of peace and peril, lay out the reflections of successes and failures, analyze the debates about right and wrong, understand the ‘system’ of all under heaven, and fathom the emotional dispositions of the people. This causes the students of these people to be coached and perfected in the Way of Kings, what more can one ask! As to seeking answers from the various schools of thought and perusing the multitude of histories, it serves to observe similarities and differences, and to testify to success or failure, one does not seek the Way in them. There are those who are well-versed in the structure of the books and are not getting to their intention, and although their simple and stupid minds cannot yet be made to fit the Way, they necessarily will think carefully about ritual and righteousness, they will uphold and observe the customs and standards, are those not still better than those who study the unorthodox and become erudite in it? [...] ¹⁸⁹

Fan here proclaims the correct approach to learning, and singles out the classics as the best method to study the Way, relegating other literary works to a secondary place in terms of importance and usefulness for the purpose. And yet, the way he sets up the argument makes it clear that the relationship of the learner to antiquity via the classics is indirect, they afford him a glimpse at the various moral, social, and political issues and the way that antiquity dealt with them; it must remain an indirect connection through the different kinds of media – language, portents, discussions, etc., and therefore there is always some effort necessary to “make a habit

¹⁸⁹ 上時相議制舉書. QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 293.

of”, “lay out”, “observe”, or “analyze”. In fact half of them are presented as dualities (peace and peril, successes and failures, right or wrong), once again implying that there is no direct, absolute normative message that would be readily apparent and applicable in every situation. The goal of learning from the classics is to get to and make use of the intention behind the expressions and debates, and thus ultimately to learn how to assess and deal with a given situation with the help of the classical knowledge one has acquired. However, even a learner whose abilities limit him to a superficial, structural knowledge of these books will be turned into a more useful member of society when studying them. Moreover, while in their entirety covering all important issues, there is no unifying connection between these separate aspects of human endeavor and community, with the possible exception of the book of rituals, which contains a ‘system’, *zhi* 制, of all under heaven that seems to have the greatest potential to be all-encompassing. This is the strongest hint in this document at what will become more obvious below: the connective, unifying function that the ‘good men’ ascribe to ritual. Fan Zhongyan continues to describe the problem of the current times:

Today the literary schools are in decline, the Way of Teaching has been amiss for a long time, those who engage in learning do not root it in the classic texts, those engaged in politics in their discussions rarely touch upon enlightening the people by education. Therefore literary works are weak and listless, the customs are artful and false, at the time when selecting whom to appoint, one constantly is troubled by the fact that talents are hard to find. I have heard that the rise and fall of the previous dynasties went along with the waxing and waning of literature. When observing the simplicity [in the literature] of the Yu Xia Dynasty, then one can see the correctness of the kingly way; when looking at the splendor of the [literature of the] southern dynasties, then one senses the decline of the customs of the state.¹⁹⁰ Only with the sages will substance and literary form remedy each other, will be adaptable and endless. In the final days of the previous dynasties, one was unable to provide a remedy oneself, and therefore an upstart would rise and provide remedy for it. Therefore when the literary works turn frail, then this becomes a source of worry for the good men (*junzi*); customs that are turning bad become the means for whoever upstart comes along. [...]

I respectfully ponder that the Way of the literature of the previous sages, evidently lies in serving as insignia of rulership to the realm, those who get it thrive, those who lose it perish. The sages of later generations have opened

¹⁹⁰ 國風 is a reference to the name of the first subdivision in the *Shijing*, translated by Legge as “Lessons from the states”. *Shijing* 詩經 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本毛詩注疏附校勘記/國風. j. 1, p. 11-1. James Legge (transl.), *The Chinese Classics: with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes*. 4. *The She King*. Taipei: SMC Publ., 1991. p. 1.

schools, set up exam ranks, and have led the wise and brilliant to seek them, each was made to use their mind to the fullest, realizing their potential, so as to share in the ordering of the realm.¹⁹¹

Much like what we will see later for the case of ritual, literary endeavor and classical learning provides a connective and integrative force, while at the same time being an outward sign of the state of a dynasty: the quality of the literature of an age is connected to its moral and social state; a sage will be able to make good social order and good literature mutually reinforcing, since, if taught and handled properly, it will draw talented people to the ranks of the *shi* to aid in the good government of the realm. This passage also highlights one of the basic observations that will appear time and again: the perception that the state and society today was in a state of crisis and decline, and while Fan in this memorial concentrates on the aspect of literary pursuits, it is equally clear that this crisis affects every level of the state. At the same time, however, we also see that institutions such as schools are merely a means to an end, and not the solution in and by themselves, because their goal is to improve *wen*, and ultimately educate and incentivize ‘good men’ to share in ordering the realm.

In his lengthy essay ‘On Ritual’ (1032) Li Gou 李觏 (1009–1059), in the form of questions and answers, proposes far-reaching claims about the integrative function of ritual for the state and society, by constructing an elaborate thought-model centered on *li* 禮, ritual:¹⁹²

[...] As to ritual, it is the normative standard to the way of men, the principal one of the current teachings. It is what the sages used to govern the realm and the state, to cultivate the self and rectify the mind, there is nothing else, it all is unified in ritual. Question: ‘as I once have heard it, ritual, music, punishments, and government, those are the important institutions of the realm; humaneness, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and good faith, those are the unsurpassed conducts of the realm. Those eight are used side by side, and as such have been transmitted for a long time, but you unify them in and base them on ritual, would that not be impermissible?’ Answer: ‘this is all ritual. Drinking and eating, clothing, housing, utensils, marriage, parentage, hierarchies of young and old, ruler and subject, high and low, teachers and friends, hosting guests, funerals, sacrifices to the gods and ancestors, these are the

¹⁹¹ QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 293-294.

¹⁹² See also Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 185-186.

fundamentals of ritual. What is called music, government, and punishments, these are the extensions of ritual. However, punishment also belongs to the category of government. What is called humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, good faith, these are different names for ritual. These seven surely are all ritual.’ Question: ‘I dare to ask what you mean?’ Answer: ‘as to the beginnings of ritual, it is something that accords with the nature and desires of the people and gives them a regulated ritual form (*jie wen* 節文).’¹⁹³

In ‘On Ritual’, for the realm of complex social orders, *li* connects the functional and the ethical sides of government and society, and on a more basic level it gives the nature and desires of people a regulated, coordinated form. It of course is no coincidence that what had to be translated as ‘form’ here is the same word as ‘literature’ or more broadly ‘culture’, *wen*, thus emphasizing once more the conceptual link between diverse cultural forms. In fact, the remainder of the first part claims that human civilization and culture as such is ‘ritual’, as it was created by the sage kings. Li Gou in this way defines ritual in the broadest sense possible, and puts it at the center of his systematic vision of successful government and functioning society.

In the following, omitted parts of the essay, the meaning of the ‘extensions’ of ritual for socio-political institutions is explained further: music serves to bring harmony, government provides leadership, and punishment inspires awe in order to prevent the people from transgressing. As to the innate moral categories of humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, and good faith, in terms of their outward expression the difference between right and wrong lies in whether they are ‘ritual’ or not, there are for example acts of humaneness (*ren*) that are not, or go against, ‘ritual’, in the sense that they are just making a superficial show of helping the people in a difficult situation without actually doing much to address their problems, or even exacerbating them. In this way he seems to be expanding the scope of several quotes from the classical tradition, which exhort to avoid, or not do things that are ‘*fei li*’, not ritual, including ritual acts itself that ‘go against

¹⁹³ 禮論七篇。禮論第一。QSW. vol. 42, j. 897, p. 44-45.

ritual'.¹⁹⁴ In Li's argument, an act of humaneness as such becomes normatively meaningless and an empty gesture if that 'benevolent' act fails to be 'ritual', that is, to be in tune with the desires and needs of the people; in this way, the problem also becomes one of connection, of tying the benevolent act to what is called for in this situation. The question whether or not it is 'ritual' becomes the final arbiter for acts that are supposed to be moral in the first place. At the same time, ritual is unrelated to natural phenomena such as the five phases, and also not part of human nature, as Li Gou goes on to explain:

A: [...] Music, punishments and government are the extensions of ritual, they are not completely congruent with the Way of Ritual, it is just as their foundation that it exists in them, also like loyalty and good faith that are not completely congruent with good conduct. Pointing to its ritual foundation while still placing it (ritual) side by side with music, punishment, and government thus is permissible. Today, when talking [about ritual] together with humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, and good faith, then the way of ritual does not have anything that is left out by them. So why is ritual a matter that is put side by side with humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, and good faith? The latter are what actually is at work. Ritual itself is an empty name; it is a general term for an institutional system/ system of methods (*fazhi* 法制). But it being put side by side with the four virtuous human properties, and being relegated to a secondary position as a third (as in the traditional order it is talked of in the exegetical tradition of the classics),¹⁹⁵ probably means that although there is humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, and good faith, one must place them within a system of ritual to implement them.

[The questioner here quotes the commentary to the Zhongyong to draw Li Gou's position into question, because it gives ritual the same rank as the others as a human property or character trait, connecting these to the five phases as well. According to the questioner, ritual is ascribed the paramount role among them when it comes to bringing everything together in a systematic way, because it provides the all-important regulating (*jie* 節) function.¹⁹⁶ Li Gou responds by ascribing the regulating property to righteousness, and explaining the origin and practical function of the four virtuous human properties in ancient times in bringing about the institutional system.]

The four [in and by themselves] provided everything, and thereby the institutional system had been established. Only after the institutional system had been established, was its general name decreed to be ritual, how can there be a human property of ritual? The learning of Zheng Yuan (the Han Dynasty commentator) in fact was unable to grasp the fundamentals of ritual, it merely followed the paragraphs and sentences and explained them. When the sentence

¹⁹⁴ 非禮之禮: Mencius 孟子, 4B6 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本孟子注疏附校勘記. j. 8 上, p. 143-2. One of the most famous quotes is from the Analects: 子曰:非禮勿視, 非禮勿聽, 非禮勿言, 非禮勿動. Analects 論語, 12.1 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本論語注疏附校勘記. j. 12, p.106-1.

¹⁹⁵ *Liji* 禮記 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本禮記注疏附校勘記. j. 22, p. 435-1. This is just one of numerous examples for this combination coming up in the standard commentaries of the classics.

¹⁹⁶ Note that within his framework, Li Gou needs to find an innate human property that provides the regulating function that ritual as innate property has in the commentarial tradition, therefore he needs to point to *yi* 義 instead as the innate source for it; however, *jie* (regulating) is used quite often in connection to ritual or music in the rest of the essay, so this is just a logical step he is forced to take in order to fit it to his external thought-model of ritual, rather than an attempt to dismiss *jie* as irrelevant for ritual.

turned east then he turned east, when the sentence turned west then he turned west, there are a hundred thoughts and a thousand matters, but there is no unifying lead. Therefore when he came to the teaching of the human properties, he sought to expand the human affairs in order to match them with the Five Phases [theory], he did not investigate its origin, and was not aware of its consequences, how can that constitute knowing ritual?¹⁹⁷

Two things are to be learned from this passage: firstly, for Li Gou, ritual provides the ‘institutional’ system that connects different human properties, acts of government, and human dispositions, resembling the “system of all under heaven” that Fan talked about briefly in the first text. Secondly, he tries very hard to disengage ritual from human nature or innate ‘properties’, instead defining it as empty name that merely provides said institutional system and connections to the other entities. To do this, this and the following passage make rather sweeping and grand claims about the inability of ‘later Confucians’ to see the intention behind a tradition that places ritual in the midst of the other human properties; instead they are merely following the outward form of the text and try to achieve for it a superficial coherence with other concepts. When his questioner quotes another text where ritual is named as one of the five human virtuous properties, he dismisses it due to its problematic transmission history as “not suitable to observe the intention of the sages”.

Later people, when seeing that humaneness, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and good faith were named side by side and in the same breath, said that in the application of the five, each had its separate area. Therefore when [discussing how] humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, and good faith become enacted, they then did not draw on ritual, but instead assigned them to the individual self (*sixin* 私心); when [discussing] the enactment of ritual, they then could not debate humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, and good faith, and merely drew on the utensils, clothes, form, and color, as well as rising and descending (i.e. the gestures and postures that ritual consists of), and the words and language to trifle with, erroneously assuming that the method of the sages to create ritual did not go further than extreme luxury and wealth, than dazzling the eyes and ears of the people and nothing more. They (people of later ages) implemented these things without knowing its foundation, they saw their outward appearance and did not know the intention [behind them], therefore they said that ritual consists of substantial form, and can be used at any time, with the Former Kings it was a creation, and we are allowed to create; the Former Kings had changes, and we can change; not knowing the reasoning why the former kings created and changed [things], something was done, but how could the reasoning why this was created and changed again be applicable [in this exact way]? If the extent of what ritual reaches stops at the utensils, the clothing, and their appearance, as well as the motions and words, and

¹⁹⁷ 禮論七篇。禮論第五。QSW. vol. 42, j. 897, p. 52, 53.

there is no great social standard of humaneness, righteousness, wisdom, and good faith, this is the duty of petty officials, why were the sages so conscientious about it like this?¹⁹⁸

The problem in the tradition that Li Gou describes appears somewhat paradoxical: later people, by placing ritual in the same category as the other features of human nature and defining different areas of application for them, were left with no choice but to limit the discussion of ritual to outward features, gestures, forms, and implements, rather than normative principles. However, these outward forms are contingent to the circumstances, and when trying to continue or change things without knowing the intention behind it, they failed to realize the true importance and significance of ritual. Having said this, in a response to criticism leveled at his essay, Li Gou fifteen years later asserted that in his thought-model he was not externalizing ritual entirely, drawing on several analogies to show that *li* remained connected to the inner self, because for the creation of the institutional system of ritual, the former sages drew on all the four virtuous properties innate to them, while later wise men sought to detect innate humaneness and righteousness when studying the sagely institutions.¹⁹⁹

In his original essay, the glaring discrepancies between Li Gou's thinking and Confucian commentarial tradition are once again brushed aside in the following passages, by the assertion that Li Gou has captured the unified truth of the matter, and that the differences at best are a function of different intentions of the texts, and at worst betray the ignorance of the other commentators.²⁰⁰ Quite explicitly he makes himself the judge of right or wrong, and declares his independence of tradition, if it indeed fails to fit his own thinking and '*Erkenntnis*'. In this way

¹⁹⁸ QSW. vol. 42, j. 897, p. 53.

¹⁹⁹ 禮論後語. QSW. vol. 42, j. 898, p. 63.

²⁰⁰ QSW. vol. 42, j. 897, p. 53-54.

he is the most radical of the *guwen* thinkers discussed here, coming closest to claims of universal, knowable truths that we have called the sincere mode of thinking earlier. However, there are shared elements between them, as the following parts from a *fu*-poem, once more by Fan Zhongyan will show:

Grand Ritual provides integrating regulation (*jie*) to heaven and earth²⁰¹

Only the regulating (*jie* 節) property of grand ritual integrates [entities as different as] heaven and earth, and is observable. Its greatness is that it permeates the normative principles of all kinds of things, its regulating (*jie*) consists in inscribing the grid within which the myriad changes take place. The eminent and humble are being thoroughly differentiated, it provides a line-up to the high and the low without ambiguity; expanding and contracting are in tacit correlation with each other, it controls joy and sorrow and then there is constancy. [...]²⁰²

Ritual serves to manifest hierarchies, human and otherwise, and in this way also provides social cohesion. Fan here and in the following omitted passages focuses on the word *jie*, in the context of norms or ritual commonly translated as ‘regulate/regulated’; this convention has been followed in the translations given, but as we will see over the course of this discussion, the other meanings of that word, ‘node/joint’, ‘rhythm/beat’, and related, but somewhat less common, ‘to harmonize, to coordinate, to reconcile sentiments and nature’, all come into play when the ‘good men’ talk about ritual, by juxtaposing both its differentiating and cohesive function, probably best embodied by the concept of the node or joint that both divides and connects different entities, and fits well with Seligman et al.’s definition of the ambivalence of boundaries.²⁰³ Not unlike as

²⁰¹ My translation of the eponymous passage reflects Fan’s interpretation. Legge translates: “In ceremonies of the grandest form there is the same graduation that exists between heaven and earth.” James Legge (transl.), *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism; Pt. 3&4, The Lî Kî*. 2 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966 (reprint of 1882 ed.). vol. 2, p. 99. This is from the Record on Music (*Yueji*) of the *Liji*, therefore, *jie* in that text and its commentaries seems to edge towards the meaning of ‘rhythm, regulating’, emphasizing the hierarchical distinctions brought by ritual that Fan also refers to later. *Liji* 禮記 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本禮記注疏附校勘記. j. 37, p. 668-1. For a discussion of the possible late provenance of this text, which also appeared as part of a chapter of the (reconstructed) *Shiji*, see: Martin Kern, “A Note on the Authenticity and Ideology of Shih-Chi 24, *The Book on Music*.” *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119:4 (October 1999). p. 673-677.

²⁰² 大禮與天地同節賦. QSW. vol. 18, j. 368, p. 41.

²⁰³ See entry for *jie* 節 in: *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典 3.0 (CD-ROM edition). Hongkong: Commercial Press (H.K.) Ltd., 2007. vol. 8, p. 1172. (Henceforth: HYDCD). For “harmonizing sentiment and nature”, although with

for Li Gou, it is ritual that brings everything together, and provides the grid for all the changes that happen in a changeable world.

At the same time Fan emphasizes the fact that ritual's regulating function is correlated to cosmological phenomena such as the great ultimate (*taiji* 太極), *yin* and *yang*, as well as the sun and the moon. Thus, the cohesive, regulating property of ritual here has a more universal and cosmological thrust than Li Gou would allow, who in his own essay on the topic denied the validity of linking ritual to cosmological concepts such as the five phases. Fan then goes on:

Therefore one knows that its regulating and integrating [property] is the basis of ritual, ritual is the mechanism of regulating, [the act of] regulating avails itself of ritual and its implementation becomes apparent in it; when ritual is able to achieve regulated-ness its success then becomes complete. [...Governing is also linked to nature and cosmology...] Those who consult each other about the ancient bowls and cups, and exchange jades and silks, certainly ignore the regulating property of ritual, as all these [merely] are the utensils of ritual. [...]

[Once more natural hierarchies are mentioned as a case in point.] What is ordered and created is in accordance with the times, it is composed in a multitude of forms and yet is measured; it surrounds us, and revolves around the four seasons without end. The state through music is led to ultimate harmony, and through ritual fosters the great regulating force. It unites our times with antiquity and provides everything, with [the hexagrams of] heaven and earth it is placed side by side. There exists something (that is, the classics) to observe the sages' regulating; how would it be possible for all under heaven to not know what grand ritual has been set up for?²⁰⁴

Despite the different, largely cosmological thrust of Fan's ruminations, befitting of the Book of Changes that he alludes to in the final passage, like Li Gou he ascribes to ritual the function of providing a regulating and cohesive force to the state, and also connects the present to antiquity. While it is not explained very well how we get from cosmic ritual to humanly created ritual, the sages have a pivotal role in it. More importantly, similar to Li Gou, Fan here belittles the efforts of those who limit the discussion of ritual to material objects and forms, a hardly veiled reference to the efforts made during the 10th and 11th century at categorizing and describing cultural and

relatively late glosses: *Zhongwen dacidian* 中文大辭典. Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua daxue chubanshu, 1990⁸. vol. 7, p. 73-74, no. 10. Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 13.

²⁰⁴大禮與天地同節賦. QSW. vol. 18, j. 368, p. 41.

ritual artifacts, both by the state and individuals.²⁰⁵ Instead, he emphasizes the changeability, diversity, and the role of current circumstances in the creation of outward forms.

In a different *fu*-poem Fan further explains the importance of creating forms such as utensils and images in a way that they are not just an empty form, again drawing on the Book of Changes as reference:

Tailoring utensils and valuing images²⁰⁶

Utensils are but adaptations to the uses of a period; likenesses are merely an instrument to observe an intention. One ought to tailor the utensils so as to support (何=荷) the basis, and truly valuing the image should be considered first and foremost. [...] Studying the thrust of the great ‘Book of Changes’, one sees the humaneness and sagacity of high antiquity. When providing their utensils, then it was in order to be suited to the function; when they preserved something in its image, then they did not lose its correct property. Their tailoring always was measured, serving as an exact guideline for later generations; its function in each case heeded [the needs of] human beings, satisfying the sentiments and nature of all the people. At the start of when they provided the material objects, they established the aim of their intention; those who eat birds and beasts, are worried about the easy onset of disease and injury, those who live in nests and dens decry the insecurity of the changes of climate. We merely have pestle and mortar as well as the official record of the seasons, the text/pattern of the *Xiao guo* 小過²⁰⁷ hexagram is what follows from this; the change of customs in houses, in the method provided by the *Da zhuang* 大壯²⁰⁸ can it be observed.

[...The cultural achievements of the three August Ones of creating the utensils is described, and how this is reflected in the hexagrams of the ‘Change’...] When simplicity has not been let go, then the utensils and likenesses are consistent; when simplicity has already been lost, then the utensils and likenesses are inconsistent. If the different

²⁰⁵ For an overview and discussion of those efforts in the Northern Song, see Jeffrey Moser, *Recasting Antiquity: Ancient Bronzes and Ritual Hermeneutics in the Song Dynasty*. Harvard University, 2010 (Dissertation). Note that one important work of collection has been compiled by Ouyang Xiu, this will be discussed below.

²⁰⁶ Somewhat truncated from “以制器者尚其象” in the *Yijing* 易經 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本周易注疏附校勘記. j. 7, p.154-1. Note that *xiang* 象 in the context of the *Yijing* is glossed as “explaining the significance/meaning of the divination” (HYDCD. vol. 10, p. 14, no. 20), a meaning that certainly has a bearing on what Fan is arguing for; however, the context shows that the more general translation is better here.

²⁰⁷ This is hexagram no. 62 of the *Yijing*, and in the interpretation supplied by Legge in the footnote (James Legge (transl.), *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism; Pt. 2, The Yi King*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966 (reprint of 1882 ed.). p. 203-204) he states: “Is it ever good to deviate from what is recognized as the established course of procedure? The reply is – never in the matter of right but in what is conventional and ceremonial – in what is nonessential – the deviation may be made, and will be productive of good. The form may be given up, but not the substance.” As this appears to be a paraphrase of the commentaries, I was unable to adapt the terminology to my own. *Yijing* 易經 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本周易注疏附校勘記. j. 6, p.134-1.

²⁰⁸ Hexagram no. 34 indicates that (under the conditions which it symbolizes) it will be advantageous to be firm and correct. Legge, *The Yi King*. p. 129. *Yijing* 易經 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本周易注疏附校勘記. j. 4, p. 86-1.

forms are incompatible (as are round and square), [this shows that] they took their shape on the spur of the moment at the carpenter's; if they are neither too small nor too large, [this indicates that] they completely follow the intention gotten from the diagrams of Fu Xi; hence one observes the method of tailoring the utensils, thusly one sees the right way of valuing the images. One must examine the images that are beneficial, one must expose the utensils that are set up in an empty way. Therefore it is said: 'the sages established the proper utensils to the benefit of all under heaven.'²⁰⁹

By way of the texts and objects transmitted from antiquity we can observe the way that the sages tailored the implements and artifacts they created to fit their function. Much like with the literature of the ages, the simplicity of objects and forms, as well as the fact that they are a good fit, is a sign of their quality and functionality, and allows us to choose or even create the right ones for ourselves. While in this *fu*-poem the objects for once are in the focus, the way that these objects are supposed to be studied and created is in full accord with what we have seen earlier.

The following text, once more a *fu*-poem, provides another angle on the role of ritual in the state.

Note the fact that *qi* 器, object/utensil/instrument, in this context takes on a different meaning than before:

Ritual and righteousness turned instruments *qi* 器²¹⁰
(by valuing ritual and making righteousness apparent, these are turned into instruments)

Ritual and righteousness give rise to each other, the sages and the wise hold these in high esteem; already seeing them as essential for transforming people, the effect of these being used as instruments then becomes apparent. Cultivating them in the self, one wishes²¹¹ for success late in life so as to be conscious of these, giving them form in government, one sees the eternity of their application in daily life. In the classical texts one can find that each word is inspired by this, [let's] avail ourselves of their instrumentality and propagate their educational value; respect their righteousness and value their ritual; having their base in the great unity, how could they depend on the elaborations of an ornate style; seeing that there was nothing left not done, could that really be [accomplished] by settling for the superficial, material form? Unhurried it still succeeds, creating order in the eras. In this way one reaches the state of being full without flowing over, in this way knowing to use this leads to its implementation. The name for the one

²⁰⁹ 制器尚象賦. QSW. vol.18, j. 368, p. 42. The last sentence is a slightly changed reference to the *Yijing* (online version). Scripta Sinica. 重刊宋本周易注疏附校勘記. j. 7, p. 157-1.

²¹⁰ From the commentarial tradition of the *Liji* 禮記 (online version). Scripta Sinica. 重刊宋本禮記注疏附校勘記. j. 22, p. 435-2, 436-2.

²¹¹ Note that this is an unusual translation for 豈 *qi*, the reason for which lies in the parallelism with the next sentence which makes a verb necessary. See gloss in HYDCD. vol. 9, p. 1344, no. 5.

who sees this is ‘the Wise’, the name for the one who illuminates this is ‘the Enlightened’; they combine two separate good [things] to serve the same [good] end, both are able to make full use of them; they listed the five relationships and have made them common for a long time now, why would they worry about changes being abundant? In this way they transformed that state, by instrumentalizing this ritual and righteousness; their (ritual’s and righteousness’) goodness is blended together and forms one [greater good], but the way they are set up is different and [in this respect] they are two separate [entities].

Aiding in government and transformation [these two] can have a great impact, in the past and today this will never fail to be the case. [...] How can it not be a lever for the ruler, given that if it weren’t for ritual, what would he hold on to; as to the way of establishing talents, it is only righteousness that can be the currency for that. To reside on high and yet not be detached from us, to transform the ones below, how would [that] not originate in this (ritual and righteousness). If it is there then there is peace, if it is in tilt then it (peace) is not to be seen; it is palpable and can be transferred [to other situations], [leading one] to trust in one’s choice of what ought to be done. Thus it is known that the instrumentality of the former is the beneficial thing that in this way forms the ‘people’ [as a social entity], and that the latter is the instrument that brings about the submission of all and sundry to the good man (*junzi*). It must be that when using them they can become a currency, and as a result they are disseminated and thus have an effect. Observing that the two have no concrete form, one could forget that there are words that [provide] a respected image [of it]. Brandishing it just to defend oneself, would there not be the shame of being a fraud? Bear this in mind, and you will act without acting. Just heed the warning against wielding [ritual and righteousness] in an empty way; never forget the admonishment against being over-confident. When resting peacefully above and bringing order to the people, how can one see to this being carried on by lesser men? To take decisive action in the face of an emergency, can really only an outstanding talent manage that? Today [if] the realm [were to] study antiquity and not forget, and propagate these virtuous customs in the farthest parts, its ritual would be the regulating force (*jie*) that integrates entities [as different as] heaven and earth, its righteousness would be the ideal that rectifies [everything] in the four directions. [It would] topple the myriad countries and have no boundaries, and [ultimately this would] lead to the great Dao not being [just] an instrument.²¹²

Here, a duality of ritual and righteousness is proposed as essential to good government and the transformation of society. From the perspective of our framework it is especially interesting to note that ritual is conceptualized by Fan as being separate from, but equally important to idealized righteousness; now, again, this is not to say that the term righteousness is the same as sincerity, what Fan discusses is not exactly the duality of our framework; however, in the introduction we already have pointed out that it is less the strict identity of the terms, than the way how these terms are conceptualized that is of interest; in this case, therefore, the fact that ritual is an equal constituent in a duality, rather than merely an expression, a function of another overarching norm is the key to see that Fan Zhongyan here indeed offered a similar vision of ritual as discussed by Seligman et al.; *li* has normative value on its own terms for Fan, but a

²¹² 禮義為器賦. QSW. vol. 18, j. 367, p. 11.

reference here to the topic of the previous *fu*-poem reminds us of the predominantly regulating, connecting (*jie*) function that ritual has in Fan's thinking; it is righteousness that 'rectifies' things with its normative power, not ritual. While the context of this *fu* is unknown, it does read like a defense against accusations of merely using ritual, and especially righteousness in a utilitarian way as a means to an end in politics, and thus actually being dishonest, and, yes, insincere when invoking these terms to achieve a particular goal. This is noteworthy because we will see that this is what Fan Zhongyan et al. did during their time in politics, using both claims about the correct ritual and strong statements about the right thing to do in a given situation to further their 'good' cause. Fan's defense, assuming that it is one, is two-fold: on one hand is the claim that it is a necessity to use ritual and righteousness as tools in the political system, in fact, without their help, the end goal of 'the great *dao*' would not be attainable; using them in a utilitarian way is a precondition to abolish the need for utilitarianism. We will see other instances later where Fan defends his seeking a reputation in similar terms, by pointing to the beneficial effects in the past of sages seeking to make a name for themselves, which then in turn had a positive influence on their environment and posterity. On the other hand Fan Zhongyan points to the importance of a sincere intention behind such utilitarian acts: to treat ritual and righteousness as a means to an end is acceptable if it is not for selfish reasons, i.e. to defend oneself, or done in an over-confident way. In other words, Fan Zhongyan is saying that one can be sincere and moral when using ritual for one's good purposes, but this is not the same thing as proclaiming that the ritual act itself has to be sincere and true to one's inner state, or follow overarching norms or ethical certainties; to the contrary, Fan's insistence on the utility of these concepts appears to create a distance to such overarching principles. In this way, ritual is preserved as a separate entity both by assuming that it is different from righteousness, and that it can be used as means to an end.

The *Benlun* 本論, ‘On Fundamentals’, by Ouyang Xiu (1042) is said to have been part of a campaign to support Fan Zhongyan’s bid for power, and to make the essential claim of the reform-movement about the importance of government and its institutions in ordering the state;²¹³ Hymes and Schirokauer have argued that ‘On Fundamentals’ in its first part, which later was omitted by Ouyang Xiu from his own compilation of his *wenji*, asserts the primacy of institutional solutions for the practical problems of the military and the finances.²¹⁴ In its second part it deals with the origin and normative function of ritual:

Of old, when Yao, Shun, and the three dynasties created government, they set it up creating the institution of the well field system, they registered the people of the realm, counted their heads, and all were given their land. Of all the people who could manage to plow, there was none who did not have the land to till it. Collecting one tenth, they dispatched [someone] to levy their taxes, so as to supervise the non-diligent among them, causing the people of all under heaven to all exhaust their strength in the fields, and not have the leisure for anything else. But again [some] dreaded their hardship, and then became lazy and entered into the abnormal, thereupon they (the sages) created domestic animals and all kinds of wines so as to nourish their body, different musical instruments and ritual vessels to please their ears and eyes, and in the time when they did not till and rested their strength they educated them using ritual. Therefore following their [habit of] hunting they created the ritual of hunting, in accord with them taking partners they made the ritual of marriage, in response to their death and burial they made the ritual of funerals and sacrifices, and in response to them gathering to drink and eat as a community they made the ritual of the village archery contest. It was not only to prevent disorder among them, it also was so as to educate them, causing them to know [to differentiate] superiors and inferiors, young and old, all [of which] are the important relationships among the people. Therefore in all the ways of births and deaths, all was based on what they desired and made it controlled (*zhi*). The things [that ritual] was adorned with were colorful and patterned, so that being delighted about it would cause a change in their inclination; [ritual] would be in accord with their sentiments and nature and make it regulated (*jie*), so that being prepared for it would cause them to not transgress.²¹⁵

²¹³ Bol, “Government Society and the State.” p. 139-140.

²¹⁴ Conrad Schirokauer, Robert P. Hymes, “Introduction,” in: Hymes, Schirokauer (eds.), *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. p. 1-58. p. 14-16.

²¹⁵ 本論上. QSW. vol. 34, j. 730, p. 366-367. Note that the editors of the QSW, reflecting the editorial decision of Ouyang Xiu, have numbered the original second part the first one, and appended the original first one without numbering it. Thus, this is the second original part, despite the name. See also the annotation to the original first part (本論. QSW. vol. 34, j. 730, p. 373). See Hymes, Schirokauer, “Introduction,” in: *Ordering the World*. p. 14-16 for a discussion of the editorial history and their interpretation. For another introduction, and a translation I have profited from, see: William Theodore de Bary, Irene Bloom, *Sources of Chinese tradition, Vol. 1: From earliest time to 1600*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. p. 590-595.

The connection to the first, the institutional part of this essay becomes apparent when we here first witness the sages setting up the essential government institutions to give people their livelihood and place in society, emphasizing the tenor of the essay that all things have a sequence of priority. Then, however, it becomes clear that even in an ideal society where the institutions of the state have been set up in the best possible way, ritual is necessary to hedge in those who have difficulties to cope with the hard work, but also to channel and give a proper form to the desires and sentiments of human beings, which otherwise would have a detrimental effect on the stability and order of society. This is the clearest statement so far that even the sages were living in a fragmented world, in this case of conflicting human dispositions, and had devised mechanisms in the form of implements and rituals that would draw in and educate people both by being tailored to and appealing to their desires. On the one hand, ritual thus is placed in line with the practical, established government institutions of idealized antiquity, but on the other hand it also fulfills a function that the other institutions cannot fulfill, namely to respond to the diverse sentiments that are an intrinsic part of human nature; by the same token, the ritual system put in place by the sages is eternal in certain ways, as the description of social ritual shows, but in others remains contingent on the complexity of human nature, and also is not coherent in itself, as the diversity of different social rituals shows; ritual controls and regulates human sentiments so that the people are enabled and prepared to act how they should act in the life situations they encounter, but it is not making these sentiments themselves uniform, nor does it cause them to conform to absolute normative demands or overarching frameworks. In this way, the world, or in this case, the inner self is not unfragmented and made sincere as such, since the diversity of human sentiments is preserved and acknowledged as legitimate part of the ideal ancient order. Ouyang Xiu postulated in this and the third part of his essay that ritual in fact fulfills a human

need, and that the decline of the rituals of antiquity allowed Buddhism to fill the gap and become the menace to society that it currently was in his opinion.²¹⁶ However, Buddhism merely offered an imperfect response to this need, and if one were able to re-establish functioning rituals based on the Confucian principles of ritual and righteousness, fulfilling the need of the people, then it should be possible to persuade them to turn away from Buddhism. And yet, given the long time of its presence, even if such a reform were to be undertaken, it would be a long and arduous process to do so.

In the following excerpt from the introduction to the treatise on ‘Ritual and Music’ of the *Xin Tang shu* (1054–1060)²¹⁷ the historical process is described of forgetting the intention behind ritual, of relegating it to an isolated position at court that only deals with transmitted ancient forms, in this way failing to achieve the unity brought about by functional ritual:

During the three legendary dynasties and before, governing proceeded from one unified [source] (治出於一), and ritual and music extended to all under heaven; from the three dynasties onwards, governing proceeded from different [things] (治出於二), and ritual and music became empty names. The ancients, they made houses and chariots to reside in, made clothing and hats as accoutrements, different kinds of vessels they used as utensils, different kinds of musical instruments they used to make music, in order to fit the suburban and ancestral sacrifices, in order to oversee the royal court, and in order to serve the spirits and govern the people. At regular times they came together in court audiences and for the visits of envoys, on happy and enjoyable occasions they convened for the archery ritual and feasts, they brought together the crowd for building projects to create teachers’ land and schools, down to the villages and alleys and fields, [regardless if it were] auspicious or inauspicious, sad or happy [ones], of all the affairs of the people, there was not one that did not unilaterally come from ritual. Through this they taught their people to act in a way that was filial and kind, brotherly, loyal, humane and righteous, as a rule this did not come from [such things as] buildings, [ritual] acts, clothes, and food and drink [in and by themselves]. It surely was the fact that they day and night engaged with these things, nothing but that. This is what I meant by ‘governing came from one unified [source], and ritual and music extended to all under heaven,’ causing all under heaven to quietly practice and implement it; one reformed one’s ways and kept a distance from transgression without being conscious of the cause, and this became the social norm.

When the three dynasties had vanished, it came to the point where the Qin changed the ancient ways; those who were in possession of the realm afterwards, from the titles and hierarchies of the Son of Heaven and the body of officials, to the institutional system of the dynastic state, the palaces, carriages, clothes and utensils, without fail all used the Qin model; although among them there were rulers who wanted to govern, and thought about what to

²¹⁶ 本論下. QSW. vol. 34, j. 730, p. 368-370. This is the original third part, and became the second after Ouyang Xiu omitted the first one.

²¹⁷ That is the time range of Ouyang Xiu’s participation in the project, given by Bol, *This Culture of Ours*, p. 194.

change, they were unable to transcend what was [the present] and return from afar to the three dynasties and before, immersed as they were in the customs of their times; for the most they were making a few changes here and there, and in general they were content with just getting by. As to the things they dealt with day and night, they then were considering official documents, lawsuits, arms and foodstuffs as the most urgent matters, saying: ‘this is enacting government; it serves to govern the people.’ As to the ritual and music of the three dynasties, they retained their famous objects and stored them with those in charge, at times they took them out and used them in the suburban and ancestral sacrifices, as well as at court, saying: ‘this is performing ritual, it serves to teach the people.’ This is what I described as ‘governing came from different [things], and ritual and music became empty names.’ Therefore from the Han onwards, the ‘regulations’ (*jie*) that the official historians recorded concerned objects, names and numbers, actions and rituals, honoring and worship, exclusively were the responsibility of those in charge [of ritual], and were called the ‘minor details’ (*mojie*) of ritual. But using them [to worship] in the suburb and temple, and [to hold] court, even those who as office holders and high officials would do their duty surrounded by them, of all these none were able to really know [the point of it all], while the people of the realm to old age and death had not once seen them; under these circumstances, why would they desire to get to know the grandness of ritual and music, and in an enlightened way talk about its meaning, to be transformed by it in order to perfect the customs? Alas! Studying it (ritual’s) implements and not knowing its intention, one forgets its foundation and preserves its minor [details], and still cannot be fully prepared, how many are those present at what are called the rites of audience, receiving an envoy, village shooting, feasting, rituals on fields, school, capping and marriage, and funerals?²¹⁸

Again we see the secondary role of the material, outward forms of ritual and the importance of the unifying, all-encompassing intention(s) behind it. The decisive point was that in antiquity these ritual forms had been an intricate part of everyday ritual practice of the people, an experience that unconsciously transformed them in a way that brought about the desired social and normative unity, despite the diversity of human sentiments. Rather than assuming that the source of fragmentation are different human dispositions, as seen in the *Benlun* passage, here the

²¹⁸ *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. j. 50, p. 307-308. (equivalent to Zhonghua shuju edition). While changes have been made, for my understanding of the text I am indebted to the translation by Bol, *This Culture of Ours*, p. 195-196. See also Bol, “When Antiquity Matters.” p. 218. The main difference to Bol is that he translates *er* 二 as duality, which I have translated as “different [things]”, despite the fact that it would superficially seem to fit my overall argument that dualities were used as heuristic devices by good men to describe the fragmented state of the world and come to a solution for it. Yet, in my view Ouyang Xiu here is mainly concerned with juxtaposing the general, fragmented state with the unity of antiquity. This interpretation goes back to the HYDCD gloss as 兩樣; 不同, “different, not alike, not the same” (HYDCD. vol. 1, p. 115, no. 7). My reasoning is based on the internal logic of two passages in the text that describe more closely what is meant by 治出於二, in the first paragraph “as a rule this did not come from [such things as] buildings, [ritual] acts, clothes, and food and drink.”, juxtaposed with what unified ritual government did in fact come from, that is, the everyday, widespread practice of ritual; in the second it is explained in the following way: “they then were considering official documents, lawsuits, arms and foodstuffs as the most urgent matters, saying: ‘this is enacting government; it serves to govern the people.’ [...] This is what I called ‘governing came from different [things], and ritual and music became empty names.’” The point is that in both cases Ouyang Xiu is describing a variety of different ritual and government forms and acts that do not produce the same unified government as before; so logically from the context the problem is the fact that the rulers and ministers have forgotten the unified intention behind ritual government that employed these implements and acts, and instead concentrate on diverse aspects of administration and superficial ritual forms, which moreover are not disseminated widely enough to make an impact.

historic version of fragmentation is at play: the loss in the Qin Dynasty of both the correct understanding of ritual, as well as the unifying ritual and institutional forms that in antiquity had pervaded all under heaven, led to a government that only dealt with the outward accoutrements of government and ritual, and in a superficial way at that, forgetting how to activate the unifying and integrating potential that these accoutrements had; by treating them merely as rare objects, or relegating them to the jurisdiction of minor officials, they did not receive their rightful place in the everyday life of the people, and at the center of official attention. While there had been rulers with an intention to change that, historical contingencies make it hard to do so. Again, the fundamental fragmentation of the world is acknowledged to some degree, for as Bol has noted, Ouyang Xiu here appears not very optimistic about the prospect of actually reforming society to as it had been in antiquity, considering the severity of the historical break, and a society that for too long had been following the wrong, un-unified customs,²¹⁹ a sentiment that, however, already finds an echo in the earlier *Benlun* discussed above. Yet, in this case the text still puts a potential, if long-term solution on the table in its analysis of the problem, for if and when the intentions behind ritual could be made sufficiently apparent, and put into widespread social and government practice, then a return to the state of antiquity would be imminent.

Following Bol, Moser has argued that, when Ouyang Xiu himself engaged with the material remnants of antiquity while compiling his *Jigu lu* 集古錄, the ‘Record of Assembled Antiquities’, he was guided by these general ideas: the point of studying the ancient forms was to hone critical decision-making skills; in his colophons Ouyang limited himself to the correction of particular problems when they came up in the study of his collection, rather than offering his own coherent

²¹⁹ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 196

ritual system to supplant the faulty one of the present.²²⁰ This reluctance to offer a coherent system for the objects themselves is reflected in his editorial choices, in which he refrained from giving the material a particular order other than the one in which he had received it.²²¹ Moreover, in his preface to the collection from 1062, aside from emphasizing the importance of his own devotion to the task of collecting ancient objects,²²² one also might see an undertone mocking those literati who, like his friend Liu Chang, treated collecting ancient objects the same way as obtaining rare luxury items, by placing too much value in the original object; in this way they allowed their desire for antiquity to be curtailed by a material world in which the limitations of their means or their reach would prevent them from obtaining the actual objects in a quantity and variety satisfying the true desire for antiquity; on the other hand, by collecting merely the rubbings of inscriptions on objects owned by other literati in his own *collection of antiquities*, he himself had been able to be much more thorough and inclusive in his study of them, while still being reasonably sure of the authenticity of the texts included.²²³ In this way, even in his own study of ancient objects, Ouyang Xiu called on people to transcend the limits of the material form to get to the core of the issue. At the same time, the material objects, aside from the classical texts, were all that was left of antiquity, and therefore disseminating the rubbings of these objects in this way also would contribute to fulfilling one of the demands made in the previous text, namely to bring the remaining ritual objects and knowledge about them back into

²²⁰ Moser, *Recasting Antiquity*. p. 115, 118.

²²¹ It was only later that his son reordered the collection chronologically. Moser, *Recasting Antiquity*. p. 91.

²²² Moser, *Recasting Antiquity*. p. 110-111. See also Moser's conclusion about the theoretical background of Liu Chang's collecting effort. In Moser's interpretation, Liu puts the possibility on the table that a formal revival of ancient forms and canon was possible (p. 123).

²²³ Moser, *Recasting Antiquity*. p. 111-113. Rubbings of objects owned by others: p. 117. Note the fact that Ouyang also does not limit his collection to pre-Qin examples like Liu Chang (p. 123).

the focus of discussion and literati attention, in the form of a collection that was as complete as possible under the circumstances. Both texts and objects are an epistemological means to an end, and again we see that what was at stake here was not just a view of how the world should be, but also a way to come to the right decision about this ideal in a given situation.

In both texts discussed above we have seen that Ouyang Xiu treated ritual and music as equivalents of sorts, which is why we will include excerpts from a memorial (dated 8/1036) on (ritual) music by Han Qi here, to emphasize how widespread certain views on these cultural phenomena, and on the elusiveness of antiquity and ancient forms were among *qingli* protagonists. At the same time this text will also serve as a transition to the genre of court memorials and the topic of public debate that will dominate the remainder of this part. This one responds to a request by the court to discuss the virtues of different efforts at reconstruction of ancient ritual music, notably the instruments in the correct pitches, for the suburban (*mingtang*) sacrifices.²²⁴

At the inception of music, it originated in the hearts of human beings, and as a result the sentiments of happiness, anger, sadness, and joy found their expression in the concrete; violent and hurried, gentle and slow sounds then followed and reflected these [sentiments], they are not a property of the instruments [*qi*]. Therefore Kongzi said: ‘talking about music, talking about music, does that really mean talking about bells and drums?’²²⁵ [Han then is sketching the history of the problem and what has been going on so far in the reconstruction effort and the debate.]

In all humility, since the founders, one constantly used the music of Wang Pu, and never once changed it, so that there were no problems in the realm for close to eighty years. The purpose of making music is to always be harmonious. [More on the debate so far.]

Recently one has given in to the one-sided arguments of a single minister, changed the pitch pipes [used] for numerous reigns, granted gold and increased rank, finely rewarded his efforts, and after not quite one year, one again changed the system. [He laments that the back and forth will harm the institutional system of the state and incur more expenses, and criticizes the swiftness of the changes.]

²²⁴ For a thorough discussion of that debate, see Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen* [Debates on Rites]. p. 177-208, p. 377-379, p. 421-428.

²²⁵ Analects 17.11 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本論語注疏附校勘記. j. 17, p. 156-2.

As I humbly reckon it, the best thing would be to pursue to the limit the original point of creating music, which constitutes the foundation of effecting good government, causes the government decrees to be fair and simple, the condition of the people to be peaceful and prosperous, within the four seas one would live in comfort and eat well, to rely on songs [to bring about] the great peace, this then is the music that ordered antiquity, how can one seek that in the shapes of utensils?²²⁶

Han Qi suggests that in view of the problems with the reconstructions one for the time being should go back to the court music of Wang Pu, which had served the dynasty well so far, much like what Moser describes as one of the central tenets of Ouyang Xiu's agenda in the colophons of his *Jigu lu*, that is, "established practice should not be overturned unless one has something better to put in its place".²²⁷ In other words, the intention behind music – being harmonic and reflecting human sentiments – again was the main factor when deciding about right and wrong, and when in doubt, a return to historical, non-ancient forms was preferable over an imitation of ancient forms that missed the point. This is rather remarkable for a movement that propagated the return to antiquity. Han Qi is most adamant that there needs to be constancy, that changing back and forth between different systems that turned out to be faulty was actually the worst alternative. To get it right, further discussion was needed, and Han Qi therefore requests that one should keep the records of the debate, as well as the models and instruments created so far, to be able to revisit the problem at a later stage, after one has dealt with more urgent, practical issues of government. This foreshadows the role of public, fact-based debate in the argument of the 'good men', an aspect that will be encountered again later on.

The preceding review and translations allow the following observations on the various views of ritual held by the 'good men'. On one hand it is remarkable how different their respective ways

²²⁶ CB. vol. 5, j. 119, p. 2800-2802.

²²⁷ Moser, *Recasting Antiquity*. p. 118.

of thinking about the topic were: while Li Gou denies that connections to cosmological phenomena are relevant for a correct understanding of ritual,²²⁸ Fan Zhongyan draws on nature and the cosmos to construct his view of ritual, an opposition that is reflective of a larger debate concerning the importance of cosmological phenomena for ethical questions, in which Ouyang Xiu took the opposite position, negating, or at least qualifying its relevance for human affairs.²²⁹ There are also different ‘degrees’ of extremism, in the sense that with his permeating idea of *li*, Li Gou is much more bent on furnishing a normative, unified, and coherent model for government and society than Ouyang Xiu is willing to provide; the former in this way is at least edging towards the definition of radical, extremist thought models that have been offered in the introduction, and away from acknowledging the fragmented and unknowable nature of the world. On the other hand, Ouyang Xiu is more interested in the diagnosis of the historical problem and much less certain that what worked in antiquity will work again, and was indeed a coherent system; at least in the earlier text he also clearly separates ritual from the practical provisions of government, although, as Hymes and Schirokauer have noted, successful ritual still depends on being instituted by the central power.²³⁰ For Ouyang Xiu ritual as such unifies by its universal presence in society, without the need to be unified within itself, or to make too much of an effort

²²⁸ A point made by Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 186.

²²⁹ Note the discussion about Ouyang Xiu’s stance on that in Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 191-197, especially p. 193. See also: Bol, “The Sung Context: From Ou-yang Hsiu to Chu Hsi,” in: Kidder Smith Jr., with Peter K. Bol, Joseph A. Adler, and Don J. Wyatt, *Sung Dynasty uses of the ‘I Ching’*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. p. 27-55. p. 33-42. Bol assumes that the cosmos has no relevance for human affairs in Ouyang Xiu’s worldview. As Douglas Skonicki has noted, this does not prevent Ouyang from using disasters to make a political point. In Skonicki’s argument, Ouyang Xiu and other *guwen* thinkers expressly talked about the political utility of these arguments in an environment in which references to the cosmos belonged to the standard tools in political arguments (Skonicki, “Employing the Right Kind of Men.” p. 77-78). Accordingly, Skonicki describes Ouyang Xiu more as an agnostic with regards to heavenly influence, rather than someone with a clear-cut stance against such influence (p. 71-73). This point about the utility of cosmological claims fits well with the argument to be made here, namely that ‘good men’ also recognized the utility of ritual and reputation.

²³⁰ Schirokauer, Hymes, “Introduction,” in: *Ordering the World*. p. 16.

to theoretically connect it to other concepts of the socio-political realm; therefore he also leaves in place the diverse ways in which ritual plays out across the spectrum of human experience he describes; no other unifying force is necessary than the sage ruler and his good intentions, which put the unifying daily practice of ritual in the focus. From this perspective, Ouyang Xiu is least radical in his assumptions. Yet, it is the main point of the intellectual exercise that Li Gou sets up to make the coherence of his system manifest by drawing connections between the empty institution of ritual and other normative and institutional entities. Related to this is the different emphasis on history and context in these ideas – again Li Gou is the one who is most willing to radically discard textual traditions in favor of what in his own judgment he sees as the right way of conceptualizing ritual, and least concerned about the impact of history. Fan Zhongyan in the first text proposed a clear hierarchy between the classics and later textual traditions in terms of their educational and epistemological value. Han Qi for the case of music argues that more recent tradition should only be discarded if the reformed system actually is able to fulfill the purpose and intention, while for Ouyang Xiu it will be hard to escape the framework of a broken historical tradition; at the same time it is precisely this fragmented tradition and imperfect transmission that provides a way of knowing the intentions of the sages. This range of opinions finds an echo in the exchange of letters between Ouyang Xiu and Shi Jie 石介 (1005–1045) on the latter's claims of being able to deviate from received standards of calligraphy and still reflect the Way in his writing style. In this debate the question of the role of cultural traditions is discussed heatedly, with Shi Jie taking what we have called the radical, sincere position, arguing against the importance of tradition and history, and for his own internal knowledge of what was right.²³¹ In the texts discussed here it is Li Gou who makes the grandest claim, to know the truth

²³¹ This is discussed in Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 181-183.

better than the ‘later Confucians’, because he had figured out how everything was connected, whereas Ouyang Xiu for the most part avoids positing such a positive certainty and predominantly prefers to think about it as a problem and break. Moreover, for him the right attitude is not sufficient: in Ouyang Xiu’s analysis of later ages offered in the *Xin Tang shu* it is not enough for a ruler to want change, that is, to be internally willing to make reforms, given an environment where the right understanding of ritual has been absent for such a long time due to the historic circumstances after the rise of Qin. Fan Zhongyan is most insistent that simplicity of the ritual and literary form is a sign of quality of the respective society and state, while Ouyang Xiu in the last passage of the *Benlun* excerpt, at least for ritual seems to say that the decoration of its implements served a good purpose in ancient times, drawing the interest of the people and supporting the purpose of reflecting and channeling their sentiments.

On the other hand, in spite of this intellectual diversity there are apparent similarities between the different arguments that do back up the claim that theirs was an intellectual circle that shared a certain set of core ideas, and were so at least across a time span of the three decades that is covered by the different texts, if they are datable: even for Ouyang Xiu a correct understanding and implementation of *li* is the unifying mechanism that marked the difference between antiquity and later times, so while not being quite as totalizing in the construction of a positive normative model as Li Gou, he too gives ritual a similarly central place in successful government, at least in these texts. Li Gou as well makes some allowance for the context of a given time in his system of ritual connections, and all the other arguments in some way or other address the question of the historical break that took place after antiquity that needs to be taken into account to come up with a solution for the current problems. With some nuances among them, ritual utensils and

gestures, in other words the outward forms as such, are relegated to a secondary place as means to an end, while the decisive point is to analyze and know the intention behind a particular ritual and form. Therefore, all of them speak disparagingly of literati efforts at reconstituting antiquity that are exclusively concerned with the objects or forms, and with superficial coherence.

Allowing for some qualification for the case of Li Gou and his critique of ‘later Confucians’, the ‘good men’ discussed here in different ways maintain that in the form of the transmitted written records of the classics, as well as the retained ancient forms, contemporary literati can see and analyze the way that the ancients created ritual, their intentions, and in combination with later history and tradition thus are provided with a model of, or a way of knowing the correct intentions in a given situation, enabling them to choose and create ritual and forms that fit the current times.²³²

Another similarity in their ideas lies in the fact that all texts in one way or another attempt to externalize ritual as such, as when Li Gou denies that it is a permanent part of the self as one of the human properties, and in the ritual immersion that Ouyang Xiu postulates for antiquity.²³³

²³²In 明堂定制圖 Li Gou showcases this process of determining the best form while keeping in mind the intention behind it when discussing the architecture of the Mingtang; while exhaustively discussing and drawing from the classical and commentarial tradition on that topic to present his own solution, at some point he explicitly rejects commentaries that claim that Mingtang, Ancestral Hall and Zhengqin 正寢 have a similar form by pointing to the different intentions (yi) behind the use of these buildings (QSW. vol. 42, j. 896, p. 34). Much like in the essay on ritual, he claims for himself the authority to decide this, while otherwise trying to synthesize the best form from the different classical sources. However, with its thorough exegesis of the classical and commentarial tradition this is a much more orthodox text than ‘On Ritual’. According to Hsieh Shan-yüan, it is this work (recommended by Fan Zhongyan), rather than his numerous proposals concerning practical policies, that get him the official position, if only a sinecure, that he had desired for so long. Shan-yüan Hsieh, *The Life and Thought of Li Kou, 1009–1059*. San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1979. p. 54.

²³³Twelve years later, in 1044, within a larger essay Li Gou would seemingly qualify that statement by saying that “ritual and righteousness are internal” (禮義內也), but the context makes it clear that this refers to the mechanism of how it works, rather than to where the institutional system of ritual is ‘located’, so to speak, and what exactly it is, because they are contrasted with the more superficial workings of rewards and punishment as tools to lead the people; ritual and righteousness are used by the sage to lead, because they work on the inside, “and once they have

While ritual in this model is instituted to correspond to human sentiments and desires, it remains external; much like music in Han Qi's argument, ritual reflects these sentiments and gives them their concrete and regulated expression. The general emphasis on the intention behind ritual might suggest some form of internal consciousness that is reintroduced to being at work, but as we learn from Ouyang Xiu, in antiquity the people were transformed by their practice of ritual without being consciously aware of it, it is merely the intention and insight of the sage ruler, or implicitly, his own, that is decisive.

However, the most important commonality in their thought about ritual is that it serves as an external, cohesive mechanism that regulates and connects entities that would remain separate otherwise, or are in contradiction to each other – predominantly human sentiments and desires appearing even in an ideal society, but in the case of Li Gou also different moral and institutional categories, which are not fulfilling their normative goal if they 'are not ritual' (*fei li*). The 'system' of all under heaven provided by the *Liji* that we encountered in the first text, the letter by Fan Zhongyan, for the present is thus revealed as merely a capacity, a potential of ritual, if used correctly, to provide the connective force for the diversity of all under heaven. These shared ideas about the connecting, regulating, and reconciling function of ritual provide ample evidence that the thinkers discussed here are indeed part of a diverse but coherent group of literati debating these issues, independent of the sources that talk about their social relationships.²³⁴

affected the heart, there is nowhere on earth where to escape from them" (慶曆民言三十篇. 懋節. QSW. vol. 42, j. 911, p. 267). Note also the response to criticism discussed earlier, presumably from 1047, where he basically reasserts the claim that *li* is outside 外, but also states connected to the inner 內 and 心 (禮論後語. QSW. vol. 42, j. 898, p. 64).

²³⁴ Finding connections between them is of course less of a problem with Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi, and Ouyang Xiu, but Li Gou is a different matter. Hsieh Shan-yüan dates the earliest contact to a 'good man' (Yu Jing) to 1030, before writing 'On Ritual', and a potential contact to Fan Zhongyan to 1036. Hsieh Shan-yüan. *The Life and*

The findings are thus somewhat paradoxical: we have a group of *guwen* intellectuals who diagnosed a lack of coherence and sincerity in the realm of literary endeavor, as well as the political and the social, and consequently aimed at making these more sincere by better connecting them to each other, as well as to moral-normative categories, or *dao*. However, in their minds these connections in part were forged by a category that was conceived as being non-material and non-internal at the same time, an entity that had the potential to time and again and under different circumstances allow the enlightened to successfully connect and unify entities otherwise separate – moral behavior and human sentiments, humans within society, government with society, etc. At the same time, the fragmented state of, for example, human sentiments was not changed as such by ritual, and those who concentrated on studying the forms and objects of ritual alone were bound to miss the point that the unifying potential lay in “day and night engaging with these things.” In other words, this idea of ritual is a thought-model that minus an explicit reference to a subjunctive maps very well onto our definition of the ritual mode of thought, down to the assumption of a fundamentally fragmented world that is quite prominent in the thinking of Ouyang Xiu, for example. For him it was evident that even in antiquity it was successful ritual that made the ideal unity possible, and that after the historical break the changed circumstances and distance to antiquity made it very difficult to restore this ritual connection. Moreover, it was a situational connection that would not be achieved just by mindlessly following ancient ritual form, or by recreating the ritual implements without having any idea about the intention behind their use. To a certain degree, the classics and remaining objects offered guidance on how it ought to be, and allowed the practitioner to ground ritual in antiquity

Thought of Li Kou. p. 31, 35-36n86. See also Bol’s account of the early political and intellectual relationship between these ‘good men’: Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 166-169.

and tradition, but it was hard work to, time and again, apply these imperfectly transmitted hints to a changing state and society. In short, while some thinkers in their circle, namely Li Gou, did give a more radical, totalizing spin to the idea of ritual, even he, and certainly Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu, proposed a kind of normative behavior that kept ritual in place as an independent entity and unifying force. At the same time, we also see with Li Gou that the totalizing view that there was one thing that binds them all is just one step away, and not entirely alien to this group.

So, true to the promise made in the introduction to break down boundaries between object and observer we see that, on the one hand, the claim of Seligman et al. that their interpretation of ritual is a human universal, and therefore can be found elsewhere, is corroborated for the 11th century; on the other hand, by the same token the calls for a reappraisal of ritual that the thinkers discussed here made are remarkably similar to those Seligman et al. have proposed, because they also call for a renewed consciousness for what ritual is and should do in human society. There are differences, of course, since both argue from their specific cultural and historical background, and come from opposite directions in their analysis of why one had forgotten what ritual really is: Ouyang Xiu and company in different nuances argue that one needed to transcend the ritual form at the focus in their day and age to get to the intention that the sages had when implementing it, making today's ritual conform more to what it should be; it is only the fact that ritual remains an immaterial entity separate from other norms and a unified self (as opposed to diverse sentiments *qing* 情) that prevents this from being a straightforward call for sincerity. Seligman et al. on the other hand criticize that sincerity is emphasized too much in our day and age, and call for precisely this separation between ritual and sincere modes of thought.

This rather painstaking attempt to stake out the intellectual differences and similarities between these thinkers with regard to ritual serves to prevent us from going down the same road we have criticized before, namely simply assuming that it was common ideas, in this case, views on ritual, that were the only common denominator that bound these men together permanently.²³⁵ We have seen that there indeed was a core set of shared assumptions regarding the significance of ritual, but it does make a difference that, for example, two core members of the ‘good men’, Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu, wrote in very different ways about ritual, the former tying it to cosmology, the latter limiting it to the realm of human artifice. From the intellectual perspective alone, these thinkers merely formed a discursive circle that shared some basic ideas, while at the same time encompassing a rather diverse and nuanced range of ideas and thrusts; in this form it was not a group with a coherent ideology, or who had the same ideas on matters of concrete policy; in fact, as we will see over the course of this part, it was more that these shared assumptions about ritual, and about how a literatus should act, allowed them to forge social connections and exchange ideas and expressions despite their intellectual differences otherwise. As we will see with Li Gou, it also allowed them to publicly support the argument made by the *qingli* reformers, while at the same time criticizing them in a more private manner. It will only become clear in Part II of this dissertation that the ability to be flexible and open in this way was quite significant, when we see that actors gradually lost this ability over the 11th century, a loss that went hand in hand with changes in literati visions of ritual.

And yet, at the same time it probably also is no coincidence that those among the group mentioned here who would generally appear to be most radical, Li Gou and Shi Jie, did not have

²³⁵ This is the argument that Bol makes: *This Culture of Ours*. p. 170, 410n114.

important roles in the *qingli* reform project spearheaded by Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi, Fu Bi, and Ouyang Xiu; in fact there is an anecdote claiming that Fan Zhongyan declined to recommend Shi Jie for a censorial position when he himself was promoted to assistant chancellor in 1043, for fear that he would make too radical demands on the emperor.²³⁶ In the case of Li Gou there exists no such direct statement about why he was not included, the reason might be as banal as the fact that in 1041, shortly before the *qingli* reform, he had failed his special decree examination,²³⁷ but there is circumstantial information about lacking support and a certain theoretical distance to the reform program: it is clear that Li Gou from 1030 on had repeatedly sent letters and samples of his writing to the ‘good men’ (Yu Jing 余靖 (1000–1064), Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi) and other officials, and for all we know by 1036 had entered their intellectual circle. However, Hsieh Shan-yüan in his biographical study has found no indication that they actually rendered any help before 1045 and 1049/50, when Yu Jing and Fan Zhongyan, respectively, recommended him, albeit not for administrative posts;²³⁸ already in 1044 Li Gou

²³⁶ *Fan Wenzheng gong ji* 范文正公集. 四部叢刊正編; 40. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1979. *yishilu juan* 遺事錄卷, p. 6. According to this note, after making his support for the ‘good men’ public, Shi Jie had been recommended, among others, by Ouyang Xiu, who had been at odds with him in 1035 in the exchange of letters mentioned earlier (Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 181-183). In his official biography, Shi Jie is named as the author of a poem in support of the “sagely and virtuous of *qingli*”, and at the same time as a protagonist and founding figure of the so called *taixue* style (SS. vol. 37, j. 432, p. 12833-12834), a style of writing that Ouyang Xiu allegedly would work actively against by failing those candidates who used it in the examination he oversaw in 1057, after Shi Jie’s death. Zeng Zaozhuang 曾枣庄, *Wenxing cuican – Bei Song jiayou er nian gongju kaolun* 文星璀璨北宋嘉祐二年工舉考論 [The splendor of literary stars – a study of the civil-service examination in the second year of *jiayou* of Northern Song]. Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2010. p. 21-24. In other words, the relationship between Ouyang Xiu and Shi Jie, who were successful in the same examination in 1030, was quite complicated: in a fashion, their dispute on writing and learning continued even beyond Shi Jie’s death, but Ouyang Xiu still recommended Shi Jie for political office in 1043.

²³⁷ Some of the questions that Hsieh has reconstructed from *Song hui yao* on first glance appear to be easy to answer for a self-avowed reformer, yet, it appears that none of the core reformers was among the examiners (Hsieh, *The life and thought of Li Kou*. p. 43-44).

²³⁸ It is hard to avoid the impression that Yu Jing is responding to the essay ‘On Ritual’ with somewhat backhanded compliments in the following excerpt from a letter to Li Gou, who had written it when he was 24 *sui*; in any case Yu seems to see him as a teacher, not an official: “[...] *The seven-part essay ‘On Ritual’ that you showed [me], pushes the envelope of the ritual classics, targets the orthodox teaching, it assigns a tributary role to humaneness and*

had implicitly asked for help in two letters to Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi, at the height of their influence. He attached to those messages what presumably was an essay meant to be circulated, containing ‘popular demands’ that appear to respond to and support major points of their public reform agenda.²³⁹ However, in the same letters he also in no uncertain words expresses his disappointment with the thrust of reform measures, which in his view failed to sufficiently address and give preference to the practical matters of the finances and the military that he saw as central to the well-being of the dynasty, as can be seen in his own long essay on practical

*righteousness, it relegates punishment and government to be mere appendices, and sets up their foundation in ritual, creating a school of thought of your own; you are working out what the ancients had not worked out, pointing out [to us] the essential message of the sage rulers; why should this remain unique to the area south of the Yangtze, and the reputation of your school not spread to the up-and-coming talents? Enlightening the stupid and ignorant, I cannot help but sigh happily [...],” (與李秀才觀書一. QSW. vol. 27, j. 566, p. 13-14). According to one account, Li also approached literati who would not be connected with the later reforms in 1036. In the end, Li Gou was recommended by Shen Yi 慎鈞, for a special decree examination in 1041, not by one of the core reform group. Contacting Fu Bi and others in the run-up to the exam did not prevent his failure in it. When they did recommend him, it was for teaching positions, and on account of his expertise regarding the Mingtang. Hsieh, *The life and thought of Li Kou*. p. 31-56. This qualifies the entry about Li Gou in the Sung Biographies, which considers him a “student” of Fan Zhongyan without providing a timeframe (Herbert Franke (ed.), *Sung Biographies*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976. vol. 2, p. 47). This is probably following a note in Fan Chunren’s official biography where Li is listed among the *menxia* of Chunren’s father, Zhongyan (SS. vol. 29, j. 314, p. 10282). For Fan’s recommendations for Li and his writings, respectively, see QSW. vol. 18, j. 371, p. 90 (1049), and j. 379, p. 261 (1050). In the latter, Fan points out that Li Gou draws on the *Yueling*, a text that is all but dismissed in ‘On Ritual’. For Yu Jing’s recommendation for a sinecure, see: QSW. vol. 26, j. 563, p. 338 (1045).*

²³⁹ In these alleged popular demands he called for things such as the need to translate words and orders into action, get the right people for office by differentiating between them, and making sure that only success leads to promotion, and that failure leads to demotion (慶曆民言三十篇. QSW. vol. 42, j. 911, p. 257-273). These are some of the core political demands of the ‘good men’ during *qingli*. For the separate arguments, see: words and orders need to translate into action, in different versions: *xiao shi* 效實 (p. 259), *shen ling* 慎令, *kao neng* 考能 (p. 264-265). Note normative connection of words to *xin* 心 in *kao neng*, making this an argument for sincerity. Differentiating between people: *bian ru* 辨儒 (p. 261), *cai ju* 裁舉 (p. 265); promotions: *jing ke* 精課 (p. 266). Note that 辨儒 also echoes the idea offered by Fan Zhongyan that one needs to differentiate between good and bad literati, or in Li Gou’s version, *ru*, Confucian scholars, because as he explains, bad people in a given situation will draw on the wrong quotations or precedents from the rich Confucian tradition, in order to further their own interest. On the other hand, *kao yuan* 孝原 (p. 273) in a nutshell recapitulates the argument made by Ouyang Xiu in the latter parts of *Benlun* about Buddhism and Daoism addressing the need of the people for ritual, a need that Confucianism could satisfy if it were re-formed and reintroduced into ordinary people’s lives. All this shows that Li Gou was making an effort to be part of the ‘good men’ and their intellectual circle, while still remaining critical and true to his own style.

reform, ‘30 Policies to Enrich the State, Make the military Strong, and Safeguard the People’.²⁴⁰ While the question about the reasons for Li Gou’s absence from the political scene cannot be solved conclusively here, in combination with Shi Jie’s case his example provides evidence that the ‘good men’ were being inclusive and selective at the same time, depending on the circumstances: to be part of the intellectual circle and even to render public support did not automatically mean that one would be given an official function in the reform effort; it is likely that both Li Gou and Shi Jie were excluded from it precisely because they had made a reputation for their radical ideas, and in Shi’s case, for the radical way he would argue for it, which had already alienated other political players.²⁴¹ On the other hand it is also true that Li Gou did receive support from the established ‘good men’ in the end, and that Shi Jie’s association with the *qingli* reformers was considered close enough by others that he, even after his own death, could be instrumentalized to mount an attack on them.²⁴² Putting all these thinkers unequivocally into one ideologically and politically coherent reform camp glosses over all these ambiguities and the complex nature of their relationships, which need to be put into the focus not only for the sake of historical accuracy, but also because this core characteristic of their relationship goes a long way to explain the success they had: we will see shortly that it was this ambiguity, the constant change of register between exclusive and inclusive, ritual and sincere acts and

²⁴⁰ 寄上范参政書; 寄上富樞密書 (1044). QSW. vol. 42, j. 894, p. 1-6. 富國, 強兵, 安民三十策. QSW. vol. 42, j. 905-907, p. 162-209. The latter has been dated tentatively to 1041. Hsieh, *The Life and Thought of Li Kou*. p. 59.

²⁴¹ See the anecdote recounted by James T.C. Liu about Xia Song, commonly labeled as an anti-reformer, complaining to Fan Zhongyan about Shi Jie’s poetic attack on him. Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 42-43.

²⁴² There is a rather famous incident, retold in different versions, where Xia Song supposedly had a letter forged in Shi Jie’s handwriting, purportedly instigating Fu Bi to rebel, according to other versions also claiming that Shi Jie had faked his own death and gone over to the Qidan, prompting a lengthy investigation. SS. vol. 37, j. 432, p. 12836; CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3637; James T.C. Liu, “An Early Sung Reformer: Fan Chung-yen,” in: John K. Fairbank (ed.), *Chinese Thoughts and Institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957. p. 105-131. p. 125.

expressions, which allowed the *qingli* protagonists both to forge inclusive relationships with literati of different persuasions and background, and make grand claims about what the right thing to do was in a given situation, maximizing their impact on both the social and the intellectual realm.

Chapter 2. “I will not bend my body for riches or rank”: Fan Zhongyan’s complex relationship to his mentor Yan Shu

While the previous survey of ritual theory had to remain abstract, a concrete proposal for a ritual change made by Fan Zhongyan in 1029, as well as the ensuing debate about it with his mentor, provide clarification as to how this connective function of ritual could look in political practice, and at the same time will also throw further light on this view of ideals and ideas as instruments in politics and social renewal: the issue at stake is the question of the status of Emperor Renzong vis-à-vis the Empress Dowager Liu, who exercised the regency at the time.²⁴³ Despite the fact that he had come of age and nominally did not require her tutelage any more, as he had when he ascended the throne in 1022, at 13 *sui*, Empress Dowager Liu continued to dominate the court ‘from behind the screen’, and forced the emperor on occasion of the Winter Solstice 11/1029²⁴⁴

²⁴³ This account of the regency follows John Chaffee, “The Rise of Empress Liu (969–1033).” *Journal of Song Yuan-Studies* 31 (2001). p. 1-25. See also Zhu Jianping 祝建平, “Renzongchao Liu Taihou zhuanquan yu Songdai houfei ganzheng 仁宗朝刘太后专权与宋代后妃干政 [Empress Dowager Liu monopolizing power in the reign of Renzong, and the interference of Song Dynasty palace women with politics].” *Shilin* 0, 2 (30. 5) (1997). p. 35-40.

²⁴⁴ Note also that it seems that there were at least two occasions where the emperor was leading the officials in showing their reverence to the empress dowager, the other one was her birthday, *changningjie*, on the first day of the first month, and for that occasion the emperor is on record as having asked for permission to lead the officials in the ceremony, a request that ostensibly was denied by the empress dowager, and yet, the ceremony still took place (SS. vol. 1, j. 9 (*benji*), p. 182-183). See also Chaffee, “The Rise of Empress Liu.” p. 17, who seems to conflate the two

to lead the officials in bowing before the empress outside of the Huiqing Hall in what clearly constituted a political ritual meant to demonstrate and reinforce the subservience of the emperor to the empress dowager, and thus secure her power.²⁴⁵ As Fan explains in a letter to his patron, Yan Shu, which will be the focus of this chapter, his original proposal asked that the emperor should

be at the head of the imperial princes and the royal family [in a ceremony held] inside the palace, bidding myriad years of long life to the empress dowager, and [that it should] be decreed that the high ministers lead the other official ranks in [a ceremony held in] front of the palace hall, bidding sagely long life to both the empress dowager and the emperor. In fact, there is no danger of taking anything away from the veneration for the empress dowager, while at the same time it is adequate to preserve the form of imperial nobility and privilege. It would seem that when he on his own, [just] with the imperial princes and imperial clansmen, bids long life within the palace, then the righteousness [*yi*] [of the relationship] between mother and son is enacted, while being separated from the ritual [of the relationship between] ruler and minister. On the other hand, if he bids long life with all the officials outside of the palace, then he is performing a ceremony due to a ruler by his minister, and does not uphold the righteousness [of the relationship] of mother and son.²⁴⁶

Note that the argument here for the benefits of separating the ritual into one for the inner family and one for the state match the claim we saw in the *fu* that the separate normative entities of ritual and righteousness need to be wielded in unison to achieve coherence: the righteousness (*yi*) of the relationship between mother and son ought to be separated from the ritual of ruler and minister in order to correct the problems of the day. Both acts of course remain rituals, but they are warranted by separate normative demands: the demand of righteousness, calling on the son to honor his mother, and the ritual demand of a dynastic state that allows no other supreme figure besides the ruler. This argument appears to reflect a conviction that, whatever the issue is, the solution can and in fact should take into account diverse considerations in a fragmented world, in

occasions. While it is very much possible that there was a mistake in recording, it seems equally plausible that, as Renzong became older, Dowager Liu required him to publicly show his subservience on more than one occasion.

²⁴⁵ For the abbreviated record of the event, Fan's memorial, and the exchange with Yan Shu, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 108, p. 2526-2527.

²⁴⁶ 上資政晏侍郎書. QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 291. Note that there are different records of the original proposal, I chose this version within the letter because it is the most elaborate; for the other versions, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 108, p. 2526-7; QSW. vol. 18, j. 378, p. 230.

which even an empress dowager that usurps power has her rightful place and status. This solution is not un-fragmenting the complexity of a given situation as such, but acknowledging it and achieving the best solution under the circumstances by conceptualizing it as a duality. Much along the lines of the theoretical postulates seen above, in a situation where the dowager's desire for power and her righteous demand for filial piety collided with the interests of the institutional hierarchy of a dynastic state, separating the ritual into two parts served to keep in check the contradictory sentiments and interests, and to maintain coherence at court by giving each side their due.

And yet, despite all his attempts to soften the blow,²⁴⁷ the not so implicit goal of the ritual proposal was indeed also to diminish the real power that Empress Liu had usurped from the throne: while Empress Liu may not have had the background of a large family and thus was unable to fundamentally challenge the rule of the Zhao imperial clan,²⁴⁸ she insisted on 'sharing' the rule with Renzong at a time when he was already 20 *sui*, and moreover, tried to install a confidante of hers as 'empress dowager' to rule in her stead after her death in 1033, when the emperor was one month shy of turning 24 *sui*.²⁴⁹ Therefore, despite Fan's denial, the thrust of his measure is clear, and especially significant given that Empress Liu was not the biological mother

²⁴⁷ By claiming that given the wisdom and sagacity of the current emperor and empress, he was less worried about the present than about the consequences of providing a precedent for empresses and their clans in the future (QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 291).

²⁴⁸ Chaffee describes how she had to "create" family connections by adoption, and in his conclusion maintains that she represented a new kind of regency without dependence on a strong family, instead relying on her status as (adopted) mother. Chaffee, "The Rise of Empress Liu." p. 9-11, 21, 24-25.

²⁴⁹ CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2609. The source states that the emperor was supposed to hold audiences, but the important matters of the military and the state should be decided inside the palace by Lady Yang. Fan Zhongyan speaks out against that (p. 2614-15). See Empress Liu's biography in SS for her family background (SS. vol. 25, j. 242, p. 8612-16). However, there is also an anecdote about her rejecting the proposal of a sycophant to build a Liu ancestral temple following the precedent of Empress Wu of Tang (p. 8615), underlining the ambivalent stance that she took.

of Renzong, a fact that only after her death was brought to Emperor Renzong's attention.²⁵⁰ For this reason, reducing her to the position of mother of the emperor and taking away her official, public status in the government hierarchy might in fact have made her position quite precarious, as the events after her death would show; assuming that this fact was known to him, Fan Zhongyan here shows a keen sense for the importance and impact of a public ritual.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the court did not reply, and instead acceded to his request to be sent away, if only after supposedly having sent in another memorial asking more directly that the empress relinquish the reins of government.²⁵¹ Later, after Liu's death in 1033, Fu Bi, in a memorial defending Fan Zhongyan, would openly state that curbing her influence and preventing her from eclipsing the emperor entirely was the goal of Fan Zhongyan's efforts at the time, trying to collect for Fan Zhongyan the political capital gained by his service as a loyal official;²⁵² however, the issue at hand at that time actually was that Fan Zhongyan came out to defend Empress Guo 郭皇后 (1012–1035) against the decision to depose her; in other words, Fan Zhongyan in this instance took sides against the emperor, who wanted to divorce Guo because she had been the choice of the late Empress Dowager Liu as principal wife for her ward. Likewise, a few months before that memorial, Fan Zhongyan himself had highlighted the empress dowager's meritorious efforts in safeguarding the emperor in his youth, calling on the

²⁵⁰ CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2610.

²⁵¹ CB. vol. 5, j. 108, p. 2526–2527. For the memorial itself, see QSW. vol. 18, j. 378, p. 230. This contains references to *qian* and *kun* principles (“it is inauspicious for the one holding the reigns of the *qian* (male, heaven) principle to submit to the *kun* (female, earth) ‘handle/tie’, *niu* 紐”) and, while directly asking for an end to the regency, actually also attempts to persuade her, by pointing to the allure of preserving her longevity in the dowager palace and enjoying being looked after by all under heaven.

²⁵² CB. vol. 5, j. 113, p. 2652.

emperor to overlook minor mistakes, and in this way had directly defended Liu against posthumous attacks; his intervention caused the emperor to issue an edict against such attacks, some of which aimed at giving her an equal ritual status as the biological mother of the emperor.²⁵³ On the other hand, barely a month before defending her (4/1033), Fan Zhongyan had argued against fulfilling the will of Empress Dowager Liu, which stipulated that her confidante, Lady Yang, should become empress dowager and decide on important matters in the manner of a regent, citing that elevating her to dowager status would cause the realm to doubt that the emperor could rule without an ‘empress mother’ at his side, thus again focusing on the aspect of status and ritual in the matter.²⁵⁴

The apparent volatility of Fan Zhongyan’s position vis-à-vis the empress dowager and her legacy can be explained by pointing to what we have learned earlier about his ideas on the utility of ritual: for Fan, ritual was not created to reflect a normative demand in a unified, absolute way; ideally it was brought into some relationship with ideas and morality, and in practice it could have real consequences, but it was not advisable to go all the way in the name of an abstract greater good, or to fight the bad, especially if the situation, and thus the utility and practical function of a ritual status had changed – in this case from being a very real factor in the power dynamics at court, that is, an imminent danger to the paramount ritual status and power of the emperor, to that of a revered, if adoptive ancestor, reverence and gratitude to whom could only

²⁵³ CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2617. For the suggestion on the posthumous ritual status of Empress Dowager Liu, which would have enshrined her in Zhenzong’s hall together with Zhenzong’s first wife, and with Renzong’s biological mother, who was only officially promoted to empress dowager after Liu’s death, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2615.

²⁵⁴ CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2614-2615. The footnotes talk about the fact that Fu Bi in his epitaph for Fan draws a connection between Fan’s memorial and the fact that Yang was given the title, but not the powers of regency; Li Tao follows Ouyang Xiu’s narrative when stating that that decision had been taken earlier, and that the issue for Fan Zhongyan was the title itself.

strengthen the position of the emperor and the state. As a result, Fan Zhongyan's application of ritual is shown to contain its own dialectic tension between the need to adapt, and if necessary, split ritual acts to fit the different practical and normative needs, and an almost conservative demand to preserve a figure's fundamental ritual status in the face of political sea-changes; this goes especially for that of the emperor, as the most important position, but also includes that of empress dowager and empress, as Fan showed when he defended their respective status.²⁵⁵

Whatever the exact background of these changes of political allegiance, they at the very least are an indication of the ethos of impartiality and loyalty that Fan and his allies were trying to cultivate publicly, an ethos that is explained even clearer in the other parts of Fan Zhongyan's aforementioned letter to Yan Shu (1030), a text that due to its programmatic claims and its own application of ritual is worth quoting at length here:

At one day in the 8th year of *tiansheng* (1030), I, the ranked Fan, solemnly having purified myself and under repeated prostrations, humbly hand in the following letter for your kind consideration: I recently in my unworthiness was summoned [by you] and asked: '[I have heard that] a memorial has been handed in [by you], talking about ritual and ceremony at court, was there really such a [memorial]?' I had once been humbled by being promoted out of order [by you], moreover, as to the affairs of the state, how could one dare to deceive and remain silent, therefore I rose from my mat and said: 'yes there was!' Promptly I received a severe reprimand in so many words: 'How are you somebody who worries about the state! The majority instead might criticize you for being neither loyal nor upright, and merely craving prominence and seeking fame, nothing else. If you had not ceased to be submissive and unassuming, wouldn't that have been more becoming to someone recently promoted to the ranks?' When I offered one or two things in reply, you told me: 'Do not wield strong words!' I did not dare to incur the wrath of a high minister, therefore I bowed twice and withdrew; yet, after withdrawing I thought about it, and doubting myself I wrote in alarm [the following letter]: you should know that I only fear that my loyalty is not as hard as metal and stone, my honesty is not as good as medicines and healing stones, that my talent does not become prominent in the realm, and that my fame does not reach the loftiness of Taishan, and that indeed I am not yet suitable to match up to the impartial recommendation of a great and worthy person [like you]. So when I now suddenly get blamed, how can I not doubt myself and be alarmed! You should know as well, that it would be to your own regret if I were to remain silent without expressing in detail [how I see things], [because] then I fear that the officials and scholars will censure [you for your] faulty recommendation. If that were the case, how could I feel that I have lived up to your patronage? Please let me demonstrate to you the possibility that I am true and sincere, that it all is grounded in what

²⁵⁵ For the case of Empress Guo, Fan Zhongyan in his memorial argued that an empress was in charge of *yin* education (*yinjiao* 陰教) and mother of the myriad states, and therefore should not be deposed without a grave reason. Instead, one should give her the opportunity to repent her mistakes and be reinstated in her palace/position (QSW. vol. 18, j. 378, p. 235). Note the connection to cosmology alluded to by the word *yin*, a connection that will be discussed below.

has been recorded and said before, and that I in no way dare to harness what they say [for my own purposes]; [while] it is your exclusive decision, it is to be hoped that when I rise in the ranks I will not incur the suspicions of the wise (you), and when I withdraw it will not be because of the obstruction of the wise (you), in life or death, I would be very lucky indeed [in that case].

Heaven has not endowed me with wisdom, I am ignorant when it comes to omens, but I still trust in the books of the sages, providing the pattern of the conduct of people in antiquity, [for those] above it truly reflects [what it is] to be a ruler, [for those] below it truly reflects [what it is] to be a subject. Han Yu himself said that, if one has a heart that worries about the realm, and because of that maybe once speaks out about the successes and failures of current policies, how can this be called not knowing one's place? In fact I have heard that of old, the sages sought statements from the realm, in order to make the management of the realm a collective enterprise, consequently they ordered the officials of different ranks to provide admonishment [in case of] misconduct, and the officers of all ranks to demonstrate their skills, therefore among the high and low officials there was nobody who did not engage in policy review. [...] It also ensured that there were great ministers worrying about the state, who feared that there was some righteousness that was not yet heeded, or an admonishment that had not yet found its way to the top, time and again they spread this Way, and this led to the sentiments of the realm being inscribed in the heart of the emperor, to be a factor in moving him.²⁵⁶

Here we see Fan lay out the motivation that brings him to argue against what could be interpreted as merely a well-meaning reprimand by his mentor, aimed at keeping Fan Zhongyan from following a self-destructive course, and teaching him a lesson about a political environment that did not appreciate a minor figure “wielding strong words.”²⁵⁷ Apart from the idea of a personal ethics of literati, we also see an explanation of the concept of a ‘public’ that is an important part of good government: Fan claims that good government is a government that allows all officials to speak, enabling every official from top to bottom to do his bit by speaking out, and in this way “inscribe the sentiments of the realm in the heart of the emperor, to be a factor in moving him.” It is readily apparent why an opinionated but low official such as Fan would be adamant about the importance of the ‘route of remonstrance’ (*yanlu* 言路), much like in the description of Habermas of similar claims in the development of the bourgeois public

²⁵⁶ QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 288-289.

²⁵⁷ This kind of criticism would accompany Fan Zhongyan and his associates for much of their careers; in one of his earliest political statements, a ‘letter to the ministers in power’ 上執政書, dated to 1027, he already starts by defending himself rhetorically against possible accusations of him trying to “manipulate the knowledge of the sage [ruler] and the wise [ministers]”, and wanting to “implement a plan to promote himself”, by pointing out that the fact that he was speaking up in spite of being in mourning should be sufficient to prove his sincerity (QSW. vol. 18, j. 380, p. 274).

sphere, invoking the public here is a tool of the hitherto powerless to demand participation in politics, a demand that purports not to rely on power itself.²⁵⁸

Both the letter's tone and the passage immediately following seem to show that this certainly is also a personal matter to Fan. He appears to be reacting to the arguments and quotations used by Yan Shu one by one when he retorts that, by passing the exams and being recommended he is certainly not a mere commoner, thus being perfectly in his right to speak up; despite being of lowly rank and distant from the center of power, there has been a tradition of figures without office or power speaking out and having their say in politics. Moreover, in his particular case, by virtue of the office that had been given to him on recommendation by Yan Shu himself, as well as the general call for opinions and advice that had been issued by the government, he was actually within his right and jurisdiction when offering his honest advice and opinion to the court.²⁵⁹ Finally reacting to the allegations central to Yan Shu's reprimand, he goes on to make a similar argument about the utility of good reputations as in the *fu*-poem about the utility of ritual and righteousness:

If one sees it as a fault that I seek prominence, [it follows a list of historical figures of all ages he claims were seeking prominence, including Confucius], of these sages of previous ages [that I mentioned] there is none who is not prominent, in fact the only thing I worry about is that I haven't reached perfection in seeking it. If one sees it as a fault that I seek a reputation, then [I say that] it is when the sages value the transformation [caused by] reputation that the realm starts to be urged [onto the right path]. [...] If the transformation caused by the [sages'] reputation is not valued, then when it comes to being a ruler it means that Yao and Shun are not worthy to be admired, and Jie and Zhou are not to be feared; when it comes to being a minister, it means that the eight worthies are not worthy to be respected, and the four evil ministers are not to be feared, how can there ever again be good people in the realm? If people do not adore fame, then the power of the sage has disappeared. [...]. From this follows that when it comes

²⁵⁸ Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990), p. 97, 129-130; for the ambivalent relationship to power, see p. 151-153. The point is that the recourse to public opinion becomes an instrument for the bourgeois public against the king, and within a developing parliamentary system for the opposition against the ruling party.

²⁵⁹ QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 289.

to the way of transforming, nothing is more important than fame, how would the three dynasties and the sages be manifest other than in their reputation [or name]? In fact I am worried that I do not yet seek it enough!²⁶⁰

Once again Fan exhibits a rather shrewd sense of how ideas and concepts such as ritual and righteousness, or in this case the fame and prominence of the sages, in fact were to lose their practical significance and impact if utility as such was a sign of inferiority. His self-deprecating mannerisms notwithstanding, in this way he brazenly likens himself to the sages and famous men of history, for whom their good reputation and name, as well as their seeking to stand out in a good way constituted an important tool and effective means to change the world. For Fan Zhongyan it seems to depend on the intent, and as we shall see below, the actual success of the suggestion whether or not such a behavior is questionable or not. After a passage that makes light of his work at court, claiming that just on the basis of his daily responsibilities in his post he would not earn his keep, he then goes on to give his statement of purpose:

Were I to stop at that (the unimportant daily work of my office), I certainly would be of no help at all, at the top I would not rescue this culture of ours from calamity, below I would not protect the virtue of our people, indeed I would receive a salary without any achievement [that I had earned it with]. What I can offer my ruler is just my loyal word and nothing else. [...] But when opinions are first offered, there might be some form of reward right away, leading those people of a shallow and strategic kind, to vie among themselves for engaging in empty talk; either taking up a small issue and dismissing the powerful and great [ones], or exaggerating the benefits [of their proposal] and hiding its harm, feigning reverence for the ones above, the ones below adjust their words; above one is suspicious of the opportunism of the underlings, and takes their words lightly. This is a great harm for transformative government. When looking at the five emperors and three kings from afar, then they bestowed noble ranks to esteem virtue, they granted salaries to recompense for achievements, and there was no such thing as rewarding their empty words (*kongyan*). [...] ²⁶¹

Following the model of antiquity, only successful proposals should be rewarded, to avoid sycophants and empty talk. Thus showing his awareness of the problems of a public where participation alone is rewarded and a form of political capital, he then goes on to claim that the very fact that he does not expect a reward and without fear for his own life has spoken out in an important matter should absolve him from any suspicion of currying favor and acting in a self-

²⁶⁰ QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 289-290.

²⁶¹ QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 290-291.

serving way. It follows the recap of his proposal discussed at the beginning of this chapter. To prevent proponents of the new subservient status of the emperor from using Fan's own argument about the changeable and situational nature of ritual against him, he qualifies it with the assertion that the ancients refrained from implementing ritual forms that would be disadvantageous for future generations, and that ritual forms that manifest the status of the ruler, as opposed "to degree and number of ritual and music", are indeed unchangeable, since they are tied to and "fixed" by "heaven and earth" in their hexagram-manifestation (*qiankun* 乾坤), that is, cosmology.²⁶² We have encountered this reference of ritual to cosmology in the first of the *fu*-poems already, which amidst its cosmological ruminations about ritual and change also talked of a (social) hierarchy without ambiguities that is provided by ritual. Together with Fan's later arguments against deposing Empress Guo and posthumously attacking Dowager Liu,²⁶³ we see that Fan was generally opposed to completely depriving the most important figures of the realm of their ritual status.

While emphasizing the status of the emperor, Fan Zhongyan at the same time also claimed moral agency and an important political function in the realm for himself, and in fact for all officials who are like him:

As a result of my upright character, I will not bend my body for riches or rank, nor will I change my mind because of being poor and humble. If I am chosen to serve at this point, then I must have something to be ahead of my time, and only can hope to live up to your impartial recommendation. Had you sought a self-seeking official who speaks little and hardly makes mistakes, then every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the realm would be [like that], why would you need to recommend me? As far as the literati of the realm go, there are only two 'factions'. One of them says: when speaking up my words are to be straightforward, when taking a stand I need to have irreproachable conduct, the

²⁶² QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 291.

²⁶³ As seen above, the respective memorial makes reference to the empress being in charge of *yinjiao* 陰教 (QSW. vol. 18, j. 378, p. 235). While not containing the same cosmological references, Fan's argument against vilifying Liu calls on the emperor to forgive her small mistakes in order to "keep intact the greater virtue" *quan dade* 全大德.

kingly way is upright and straight, what good would it do to bend myself? The second one says: submissive words enter [the ear] easily, submissive actions easily find agreement, my life is peaceful and happy, what need would there be to worry [about the world]. These two factions constantly are at war with each other in the realm. Order and turmoil of the realm solely is decided by which of these two factions gains the upper hand. Suppose deliberate words and irreproachable conduct are punished at a given time, its proponents are all remaining silent and leave, and consequently their insight will be hidden from the emperor, and the great ministers will mourn [the absence of] their assistance. And the faction of the submissive words and the submissive conduct will win without a fight, their ranks will rise and swell everywhere, how can this be a blessing for the country, or be the intention of the great ministers? People generally say that deliberating one's words and being irreproachable in one's conduct is not a plan that will keep harm away and help to safeguard oneself, this is an extreme case of not thinking things through to the end! If one causes each and everyone who holds an office to deliberate his words and be irreproachable in his conduct, then one reaches a state in which the ruler makes no mistakes, and the populace has no complaints, without fail there will be transformation through government, calamities will not arise, and under the conditions of great peace, there truly will be no sorrow, this is the very epitome of keeping harm away and safeguarding oneself.²⁶⁴

In the grand finale of his polemic letter, Fan Zhongyan makes his boldest claim, differentiating between officials who are taking part in the political debate and culture in a sincere way by speaking out in an honest and straightforward fashion, and those who are merely acting in a self-seeking, egotistical manner, remaining silent and meek when an ethical dilemma challenged their self-interest, a manner that, if allowed to prevail, would harm society and fail to achieve anything of value for the greater good. Especially in view of the later debates about factionalism, it is interesting to see that even at this early stage Fan already divides officialdom into two distinct groups, or factions, the 'good', sincere ones and those who are not. It could not be made much clearer which one Fan belongs to, and if one follows the account of their initial encounter in the *Changbian*, it would appear that given the silence of Yan Shu in the face of Fan Zhongyan's arguments, he at this point is marked as an outsider to this group of straight talkers and 'good men', an occurrence which we will encounter again in other situations in which Fan is challenged politically, when the opponent is described as unable to reply to his arguments.²⁶⁵ At the same time, we will also time and again see the charge put forth here by Yan Shu against Fan

²⁶⁴ QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 291-292.

²⁶⁵ CB. vol. 5, j. 108, p. 2527.

Zhongyan, namely that these ‘good men’ merely were being self-righteous and self-serving when they “wielded (their) strong words”.

When considering the politics behind this exchange, the impression is reinforced that Yan Shu’s ethics are being challenged here: according to his official biography, Yan Shu was on record as a supporter of Empress Dowager Liu, having defended her against the attempts by two other officials to get exclusive access to her and the young emperor by excluding other officials from memorializing to her in audience; according to this account it was Yan Shu who suggested that ‘all’ officials would make their requests and reports in front of a screen, without being granted a separate audience, a ritual set-up that would also allow the dowager to keep her position aloof and visibly separate from the officials. Yan Shu subsequently received an additional promotion to *jishizhong* 給事中, Supervising Secretary, with explicit reference to his hitherto unrequited services to the empress dowager.²⁶⁶ While Yan also went against a directive of the empress dowager and had to resign in 1027, it would appear that in the years 1029–1030 he was on his way up again, among others being appointed vice censor in chief around that time, and put in charge of the 1030 exam, the year that Ouyang Xiu passed it, as well as Shi Jie and Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067).²⁶⁷ In other words, by speaking up Fan Zhongyan had endangered his patron’s return to an influential position at court.

²⁶⁶ SS. vol. 29, j. 311, p. 10196.

²⁶⁷ QSW. vol. 35, j. 747, p. 246. This *shendaobei* for Yan Shu, written by Ouyang Xiu, like the biography, omits the year of the return to court, but also mentions the post as *libu* examiner in 1030, which allows to give an approximate date for his return to court and to the dowager’s good graces. Note that Yan was also among the officials forced to resign after the death of the dowager, when Renzong started his own reign by ousting officials connected to her (see below).

The connection of Yan Shu (991/993–1055, js 1005) to the reformers is thus exposed as ambiguous: while actually at least two years younger than Fan (989–1052, js 1015), he had been much more successful in his career, having passed the exams at an early age, and being appointed vice commissioner of military affairs in 1025.²⁶⁸ For this reason he was in a superior position in the hierarchy, and able to help Fan get by, as well as get ahead, e.g. when providing him with the opportunity of a teaching position at a local school when in mourning, or when recommending him for office.²⁶⁹ Therefore, for all intents and purposes Yan Shu was the higher ranking patron of Fan Zhongyan, a discrepancy that probably did not help in the matter of their disagreement. Other reformers profited from Yan's patronage and support as well: Fu Bi married a daughter of Yan Shu,²⁷⁰ and when a group of 'good men' around Ouyang Xiu were promoted to censors in early 1043, Yan Shu is named as their recommender.²⁷¹

And yet, Yan Shu's relationship to the 'good men' was not at all without strains, not just on this occasion in 1029/1030: in what was arguably the most dramatic instance of discord between them, in 7/1042, during an encounter between Fu Bi and Lü Yijian in front of the emperor, Yan Shu sided with Lü, and defended the chancellor against what appeared to be overstated

²⁶⁸ SS. vol. 1, j. 9 (*benji*), p. 181.

²⁶⁹ See Fan's biography for the report about the teaching position (SS. vol. 29, j. 314, p. 10267). For a recommendation by Yan Shu for Fan, see: QSW. vol. 19, j. 397, p. 207.

²⁷⁰ SS. vol. 29, j. 313, p. 10249. In fact an anecdote in *Shaoshi wenjian lu* claims that Yan Shu wanted to contract a marriage between his family and Fan Zhongyan's first, who then recommended Fu Bi instead. *Wenjian lu*. j. 9, p. 89.

²⁷¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 152, p. 3699. Yan Shu is lauded in his biography and epitaph for his habit of becoming a supporter of the wise, including Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi, and Fu Bi (SS. vol. 29, j. 311, p. 10197). In terms of general political theory, Yan also had professed to believing in the existence of the two groups that Fan Zhongyan describes, when he called on the emperor to differentiate between good/upright and bad people in his personnel decisions, minus the ideas about the personal ethics of speaking up, of course. This is dated in the title to the *tiansheng* era (1023–1031). 天聖上殿劄子. QSW. vol. 19, j. 397, p. 205.

accusations. Thereupon Fu Bi accused his own father-in-law of having formed a faction with Lü Yijian.²⁷² While having recommended them for the office, Yan Shu is on record for later expressing his dissatisfaction with the frequency at which the reformist censors around Ouyang Xiu spoke up about issues, and according to a slightly different source had Ouyang Xiu dismissed.²⁷³ Once more he had taken issue with how the ‘good men’ saw their role in public politics. Their political discord, however, did not keep Ouyang Xiu from providing a last service to his patron and his family by authoring Yan Shu’s spirit path inscription after his death in 1054, praising him for his literary accomplishment and his way of recommending and promoting the wise.²⁷⁴ All this reflects the complicated twists and turns that social and political relationships could take, and reinforces the realization that merely following the positive structures of social connections or recommendations will not necessarily lead to an accurate picture of political and intellectual allegiances, nor will it further our understanding of what motivated the actors in each of these instances to act as they did.²⁷⁵

²⁷² CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3286-3287. There is more disagreement between the two when the court sides with Yan Shu and his suggestion when discussing a question of wording in the official documents exchanged with the Qidan (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3293). There is a record of Yan Shu disagreeing with Han Qi (and the other good men) on the way to react to the ritually unfavorable peace proposals made by the Xi Xia leader Yuan Wu in 7/1043; Yan claimed that general opinion at court was in favor of accepting the offer (CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3408).

²⁷³ CB. vol. 6, j. 152, p. 3699. Recorded when Yan Shu was resigning in 9/1044. According to his official biography, Yan Shu had Ouyang Xiu ousted. At the time, in retaliation, Sun Fu and Cai Xiang implicated him in hiding Renzong’s birth-mother from him (SS. vol. 29, j. 311, p. 10197). Yu Jing in 3/1044 criticized Yan Shu’s (as well as Zhang Dexiang’s and Lü Yijian’s) record in office (CB. vol. 6, j. 147, p. 3569).

²⁷⁴ QSW. vol. 35, j. 747, p. 244-248. In this he lauds Yan Shu for speaking out during the reign of the empress dowager when the question was brought up if she should officiate at the ancestral ritual in imperial dress. All in all, even in Ouyang Xiu’s rendering of the story we can read between the lines that Yan Shu must have had an important role at her court, if not her confidence. There seems to be a lasting connection to the ‘good men’ even later, when a son of Yan Shu and brother-in-law of Fu Bi asked that a ritual banquet at court be cancelled because of Fu Bi’s mourning for his mother (3/1061), which caused some rumors of favoritism (CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4663).

²⁷⁵ On the other hand these social relationships did matter, at least in theory, when it came to promotions: when Fu Bi was promoted to the military commission in 8/1043, that is, after his public falling out with his father-in-law, Yan Shu asked for his own dismissal as chancellor on the grounds of his status as his relative, but was denied even to resign from his own post in the military commission (CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3417).

The solution to this problem, then, is ritual and sincerity, again, not in the sense that all the actors thought in the exact same way about *li*, but that this framework allows us to see and talk about the fact that they talked about these modes, and employed both for their purposes. For Fan's circle, the social capital of recommendations, mentorship and family ties was taking second place to what was the right thing to do in a given situation, and did not prevent them from speaking up and be a nuisance, even if it was against those same mentors.²⁷⁶ However, at the same time in practice they still embraced what was a morally fragmented social sphere in which they lived. The letter, as well as the less than straightforward story of Yan Shu's relationship to the 'good men' he recommended, show that their moral convictions did not keep them from engaging in social ritual where it was appropriate and useful: there was no reason not to seek the recommendations even of men that were not entirely up to one's normative standards, or to decline writing an inscription for them after their death. In other words, to Smith's observation that they attacked the 'oligarchs' of their time we have to add that they also *attached* themselves to them when that was useful and did not immediately violate their moral convictions, for Yan

²⁷⁶ An anecdote in *Wenjian houlu* (j. 15, p. 122) recounts how Ouyang Xiu explained this almost bluntly to a disgruntled Yan Shu in a letter: "*It is not the case that I don't see that I am a long-term retainer of yours, and it is not the case that I do not consider the kindness and wisdom I have received to be profound, but to follow someone does not lead to one's own elevation in status, merely with the conventions used in letters one will not get [to become] one of those who is in charge. Isn't it the case that with the character of a rolling stone, one is increasingly distanced, and all but detached; with a heart that is unsociable and eccentric, one is easily imperiled and suffers from many fears. If one changes the constant one receives blame, to touch on the status quo strains people, therefore in lying low, one is not only comfortable oneself, if perchance one encounters a lucky streak, one can ask to become a prefectural administrator. If one asks what an old hand thinks, then [the answer] is never far from the current customs; when one observes the important officials going about their business in the [government] hall, one seeks to be close to them and make friends with each other.*" This might be a summary of the original letter, and did not appease Yan. We also see that the advancement of the good men and the good cause, namely changing the customs, went hand in hand in their view.

Shu was very much part of that group of established, well-connected literati.²⁷⁷ The self-deprecating mannerisms in the letter do not take much away from his message; if anything they underline it, while at the same time showing that Fan was still adhering to formalities demanded by social decorum. In this way, Fan's behavior here reinforces what we said about the general views of the 'good men' on ritual: *dao* and *li*, moral politics and social ritual, were related but separate entities; sincerity took precedence in their proclamations, but ritual in no way was absent from them, both in theory and practice. Even as part of their self-righteous claims, ritual could serve to connect what was at odds and help to preserve relationships through disagreement, when giving proper expression to the righteous claims of a power-grabbing dowager, or to the respect due to an imperfect mentor who could be of use later on. In this way, using ritual forms tailored to the circumstances promoted the formation of a more perfect union between conflicting demands in a given situation. The history of the relationship of the 'good men' to Yan Shu shows that this applies to the concept of the 'good men' and 'bad men' itself, or the 'two factions' as they are called here, which in fact takes on a meaning that essentially is situational, ranging from being an inclusive ritual to demonstrating exclusive sincerity; which side it represented would change depending on the circumstances in which it was used: members of the intellectual circle were praised for their literary accomplishments to recommend them for advancement, however limited, like Li Gou, but excluded from political office for their radical stance, like Shi Jie; members of their social circle such as Yan Shu were attacked for their political morals, but still praised lavishly for their good deeds in their epitaphs. And yet, Fan

²⁷⁷ Paul J. Smith, "Anatomies of Reform: The Qingli Reforms of Fan Zhongyan (ca. 1043–44) and the New Policies of Wang Anshi (1069–1085) Compared." *Conference on Middle Period China, 800–1400*, Harvard University, 2014. Date accessed: Jul. 30, 2014. p. 4, 11. See for example the role of Chao Jiong as mentor to Yan Shu and Li Shu described by Lamouroux (Christian Lamouroux, "Song Renzong's Court Landscape: Historical Writing and the Creation of a New Political Sphere (1022–1042)." *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* 42 (2012). p. 45-93. p. 69); Chao's son served with Lü Yijian as assisting councilor (Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 61).

maintained the general diagnosis that there were indeed two factions that needed to be differentiated clearly in public political practice. As we have seen in the last chapter, this social and political practice can be tied to views the actors held on ritual, seeing it as a connecting and mitigating force that helped to overcome fragmentation, and was considered equally important, but not subject to the normative – ‘sincere’ – demands that were also part of the duality.

The other large point to gain from this letter is that Fan’s memorial, and even more so the ‘private’ letter to his mentor, not just talked about speaking out publicly, but indeed were also a performance for the public, a performance that, while aimed at gaining a reputation for the sake of bringing about what he deemed was right and proper, once more made Fan and his circle vulnerable to accusations of being self-promoting, calculating, and acting above their station. In the run-up to the *qingli*-period, there are numerous cases of similar public actions. In an especially egregious case of public performance, when a person that he considered to be evil was supposed to be promoted, Fan Zhongyan in 1035 allegedly even resorted to the kind of moral blackmail that we will encounter again later, in the course of the *puyi* debate, being used *against* the remaining *qingli* reformers: Fan not only handed in an impeachment, but also stopped eating, and in an ostentatious manner handed the family affairs over to his eldest son, thus preparing for his own death.²⁷⁸ In a famous episode, Ouyang Xiu in protest sent an outrageous letter to a censor, Gao Ruona, declaring that the latter was not a ‘good man’, *junzi*, because he did not fulfill his duty to publicly defend the wise and good against the evil people; the subsequent official accusations by the censor caused Ouyang Xiu’s dismissal, but also made the affair and

²⁷⁸ This is to prevent the promotion of Yan Wenying, who allegedly had had a hand in the death of Empress Guo after her dismissal (CB. vol. 5, j. 117, p. 2764-2765). It is interesting to see that the source for this episode is Fu Bi’s grave inscription, again representing the way that Fu Bi wants to interpret the legacy of Fan Zhongyan.

the letter part of the public record.²⁷⁹ To reiterate the point made in the introduction, when we speak of public here we are less interested in the question how public a particular statement or text ‘really’ was at a given time, although we will provide some information on that if it is available, or when it seems plausible to do so. For the purposes of this study, public is largely a normative claim, but also a means to an end, rather than an objectively quantifiable fact, especially for particular texts and statements; it suffices if a given proclamation was made in a court context and recorded as such, or a if text was handed in through the proper channels for it to be considered public; even the mere fact that a given letter was preserved and transmitted could show that more than one copy of it existed, and that it therefore was public to some degree, at some point. A polemic text such as the one discussed above would only achieve the greatest effect if and when it gained a wider audience than just Yan Shu. With his outrageous letter to Gao Ruona, Ouyang Xiu here literally created publicity in both senses, as normative claim and means to an end, by triggering an official complaint that publicized the matter to a larger audience, which is significant as such, regardless whether we can say exactly how large this audience was. As Fan Zhongyan himself had pointed out, speaking out after all was the only contribution to the greater good that he could offer, but it also turned out to be the only political capital that a lowly, powerless official had in this system. Another glaring example for this connection is provided by memorials from 1040, offering Ouyang Xiu’s righteous reasons for ostentatiously refusing a position as chief secretary under Fan Zhongyan in one of the latter’s military commands, which, however, are accompanied by a note in the *Changbian* that he was

²⁷⁹ QSW. vol. 33, j. 698, p. 82-84. For the outraged memorial Gao Ruona sent to the court to complain about the behavior of Ouyang Xiu, and relate his opinion that Fan and the others were merely seeking promotion, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2786-87. James T.C. Liu assumes that that was the intention to begin with (Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 33-34).

promoted to an academic position at court instead.²⁸⁰ In this way, the ‘good men’ were talking about the public, in public, and using the public for their purposes; accordingly, it has to be taken with a grain of salt when a supporter offered the argument that Fan’s (and another good man’s) sincerity had been proven, because he had spoken up despite knowing that if he had kept silent he would have climbed the ranks much faster.²⁸¹ We see that the question of the sincerity of these public expressions is very much part of this public debate, and in the long run it is hard to deny that both in terms of increasing followership and in terms of official careers, Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu, and the others did profit personally from this behavior; despite all setbacks, it eventually appears to have led to promotions to ever higher posts, a fact that did not go unnoted by critics, including the emperor, who lamented in 1039 that “those who talk about things today” merely were attacking high ministers and highlighting the mistakes of the ruler to angle for an undeserved reputation, without providing any benefit or help for current government.²⁸² While Renzong was not naming names here, the remark in all probability was aimed at the ‘good men’ and their outspoken way of doing politics. From the very beginning of their political participation to the eve of the reforms, this kind of criticism accompanied its proponents; while we will see below that this public display of their moral qualities was not the only factor in their eventual rise to power, it certainly did a lot to prepare the ground for it.

²⁸⁰ CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3020-3021.

²⁸¹ This was Su Shunqin (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2789).

²⁸² Criticism of emperor: CB. vol. 5, j. 124, p. 2924. Apart from Yan Shu’s criticism mentioned above, there was the aforementioned memorial by Gao Ruona complaining about Ouyang Xiu (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2786-87); Ouyang Xiu’s letter mentions a meeting between the two where Ruona supposedly had criticized Fan Zhongyan’s behavior (QSW. vol. 33, j. 698, p. 82-83); Li Shu seems to attack this behavior indirectly in a memorial that will be discussed in more detail below, 2/1034 (CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2664-2665).

Chapter 3. The critique of the ‘good men’ against empty words and public gestures

We have noted above that Yan’s alleged silence and Fan’s argument about the faction of the silent and the importance of taking a public stand highlights the criticism that he and his allies would make time and again over the course of the 1030s and beyond: that theirs was a public of literati, as well as a court and government at this point that in fact only to a small degree was willing or able to function as a forum for actual discourse of important matters. This chapter will revisit this criticism from different angles and attempt an answer to the question whether or not this normative criticism had some grounding in political reality, notwithstanding all the caveats that the concept of ‘public’ brings with it when it comes to assessing its ‘reality’.

As a matter of fact, the accounts of the exchanges between Fan Zhongyan and his main political enemy, Lü Yijian, over the following years in and by themselves appear to reinforce this point, since during the decisive encounters leading up to the *qingli*-period, the political debate is described as very one-sided: while recording Renzong’s edict to let bygones be bygones earlier, his response to Fan’s demand to honor the memory of the dead empress dowager, the *Changbian* also cites Renzong’s new autonomy after her death in 1033 as a cause for his inclination to depose Empress Guo; it allegedly is a crony of Lü Yijian, Fan Feng, who, after an incident during which Guo tried to strike one of the emperor’s favorites and inadvertently hit the emperor, suggested to dismiss the current empress on account of her infertility. When hearing of the dismissal of said Empress Guo in 12/1033, Fan Zhongyan, together with the other censors, under the leadership of Kong Daofu 孔道輔 (986–1039), first demanded to be admitted and heard in court audience, and then in the chancellery argued with Lü Yijian, taking him to task for his

scheming and for using faulty precedents from the Han Dynasty for his argument, rather than the actions of the sages of antiquity. According to the record, the latter “was unable to reply” and instead adjourned the meeting, telling the censors to present their arguments to the emperor.²⁸³ Behind the scenes, he then engineered the dismissal of the censors, arguing that banding up on him and pressuring him in this way was not an act conducive to the ‘great peace’ (*taiping* 太平). When the censors returned to court next day to present their argument to the emperor, they were greeted by edicts that demoted and fined them; henceforth censors had to hand in their memorials in secret, and were not allowed to seek an audience as a group. In this way, the account implicitly made out that Lü Yijian was not interested in gaining a discursive victory in public, and either did not command enough knowledge of the precedents to make a successful argument, or simply was in the wrong; instead, Lü solely appeared to rely on the manipulative, secretive power of his status and his connections to deal with his rivals.²⁸⁴

When looking at the next public incident of discord between Fan Zhongyan and Lü Yijian, it becomes more apparent that Lü tried to eschew public confrontations with the ‘good men’; note, however, that with the exception of Fan Zhongyan it was a different group of people – different ‘good men’ – that constituted Lü Yijian’s opponents here. In fact, right before this incident a memorial informs us that Fan Zhongyan disagreed with Kong Daofu on a suggestion; yet, he

²⁸³ CB. vol. 5, j. 113, p. 2648-2649.

²⁸⁴ In 1035, Lü Yijian allegedly secretly sent envoys to Fan Zhongyan to warn him from speaking up, and when receiving a stubborn reply went on to ‘promote’ him to the politically dangerous post of magistrate of Kaifeng, in the hope that the difficult situation of that post would not afford him the time to speak up, and even provide Lü with some reason to impeach Fan afterwards (CB. vol. 5, j. 117, p. 2766). Note that this as well seems to draw on Fu Bi’s inscription.

offers an alternative compromise, and is not using any confrontational language.²⁸⁵ When Fan in 4/1036 in a public audience before the emperor exposed the cronyism that Lü Yijian and his circle practiced, and went so far as to explain how Lü had managed to place his allies in high positions at court by using a diagram, the chancellor retorted that Fan was just “striving for a name without [being interested] in practical issues”. The allegation once again must have hit a nerve, because in response Fan Zhongyan immediately handed in four memorials that named the pressing issues that the current government faced.²⁸⁶ Instead of engaging with these, Lü charged and dismissed Fan for speaking out of order, factionalism, and sowing discord between ruler and minister, charges that once again relied more on Lü’s power and position in the hierarchy rather than a public discussion of right or wrong; it would seem that it was hard to win a public debate against the ‘good men’, given their knowledge and rhetorical skills. We see that it was Fan Zhongyan who in this exchange first used the accusation of factionalism for his attack, going so far as to draw a chart to show how the opposing side had manipulated the promotion system. After the dismissal, an opponent had the list of Fan Zhongyan’s ‘faction’ publicly displayed in

²⁸⁵ CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2783.

²⁸⁶ CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2783-84. However, the suggestions do not sound very concrete and practical in terms of what to do, and instead gave general advice on how to act as a ruler, and as such anticipated the very general demands behind the *qingli* reform that we will discuss below: the first talked about the necessity of the ruler to have clear preferences and proclivities towards the good and against the bad, drawing on numerous examples, and arguing against any validity of Laozi’s claim that one should stay aloof and not take sides or action (*wuwei*), in the ages after ‘high antiquity’ *taigu* 太古 (QSW. vol. 18, j. 386, p. 409); the second about the need to select the wise and promoting talent, but under the premise that there is not just one way to do this, or just one kind of talent, among others drawing on the diversity of talent among Confucius’ disciples to make the point (p. 410-411); the third talks about the importance and utility that a good reputation had for the sages and their reach and legacy, and in fact for any state or society, and that to seek to make a good name for oneself was not bad in and of itself, because even the sages did so; again one should not go with what the Daoists had to say about that (p. 411-412); the last item talks about the division of labor in government, where the ruler has no choice but to delegate certain things to his officials, but should make sure that the important powers, such as final arbitration of good and bad, as well as promotion and demotion of his close ministers would remain with him; only once these were firmly in his hands, could one talk about ‘non-action’ (p. 412-414). Note the exegesis of the pertinent quotes that Fan offers in small script in these memorials.

the court hall in retaliation; this incident represents an early instance of proscription lists, but it had been Fan who first drew the factional card in his attack.²⁸⁷ Again, what makes these accusations public was the fact that he presumably presented them in an official audience at court, in the presence of other officials, including some tasked with recording the event.

Rather than cowing the ‘faction of good men’, the dismissal of Fan Zhongyan had the opposite effect: several other officials would speak out in Fan’s defense and be dismissed, some going so far as Yin Zhu 尹洙 (1001–1047), who asked for his demotion on the grounds that given his previous association with Fan Zhongyan, he should be punished too if the latter indeed had been ousted for forming a faction.²⁸⁸ Yin Zhu thereupon was granted his wish. While it must be assumed that there had been prior contacts between most of the literati that spoke up now, there was also the case of Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067) and the poem that he circulated in support of the good men, where the sources give the appearance that he did not have any prior connections to them, and subsequently became part of the circle (although he had been in the same exam year as Ouyang Xiu and Shi Jie), first being guarded from prosecution by Han Qi in 1036, and then being recommended for a censorial office in 1043 after another congratulatory poem.²⁸⁹ This is remarkable for two reasons: first, it shows how writing these poems became a trope between 1036 and 1043, when Cai Xiang, among others, in turn ended up being lauded by Shi Jie in this

²⁸⁷ CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2784. This, and a subsequent, related dismissal to Lingnan is when the *Changbian* has the phenomenon and ‘talk/dispute’ *lun* 論 of factionalism start (CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2844–45; see also: CB. vol. 5, j. 122, p. 2881).

²⁸⁸ For Yu Jing and Yin Zhu’s statements, see: CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2785–86. Ouyang Xiu, Cai Xiang, Su Shunqin, p. 2786–89.

²⁸⁹ Poem and defense by Han Qi (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2787); recommended with other ‘good men’ by Sun Mian already in 1041 (CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3127); for 1043 recommendation by new censors Ouyang Xiu, Yu Jing, and Wang Su, and its implied connection to the second poem: SS. vol. 30, j. 320, p. 10397.

way.²⁹⁰ Secondly, an anecdote about how Cai Xiang's original poem was circulated in 1036 suggests that we should not imagine the Renzong-era public sphere as being limited to the court, or indeed the area controlled by the Song Dynasty, nor was it unmotivated by commercial interests: supposedly the literati of the capital vied with each other in copying the piece, and the book hawkers in the markets made handsome profits selling it; in this manner a copy allegedly found its way into the hands of an envoy from the Qidan, who took it back to Liao to be displayed.²⁹¹ Others would offer their support as well, who had less direct connections to the good men, if any: in 12/1037 Ye Qingchen on occasion of several earthquakes spoke out defending officials who 'talked about things' (*yan shi* 言事), such as Fan Zhongyan and Yu Jing, while elder statesman Cheng Lin dissuaded the emperor from exiling Fan Zhongyan to Lingnan, considered a deadly place.²⁹² It appears plausible that all their displays of public virtue in 1036 had increased their standing among officialdom, and created a followership for Fan Zhongyan and his associates. Yet, it must be noted that it is rather unlikely that the 'good men' did not engage in secret dealing of their own to organize their group and to make their political moves; at least two passages from the *Changbian* make allegations in that direction.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3370; SS. vol. 37, j. 432, p. 12835. However, a memorial by Ouyang Xiu during *qingli* against poems that were circulated anonymously to attack court ministers seems to indicate that the 'good men' were also at the receiving end of this form of public agitation, however, we do not know who wrote them; note what seems to be an indirect reference to Shi Jie's poem about the sagely and virtuous to illustrate the approval of 'all under heaven' for Han Qi and Fan Zhongyan (QSW. vol. 32, j. 679, p. 106-107). While it might be assumed that the 'good men' did not write anonymously, it is not always clear if the poems carried a name when they were circulated.

²⁹¹ SS. vol. 30, j. 320, p. 10397.

²⁹² CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2844-45. Ye would be ousted by Lü Yijian, and as late as 1049 he would mention good men such as Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi, and Han Qi favorably in a memorial, which, however, also praised Xia Song, the *qingli*-villain who had framed Shi Jie posthumously (SS. vol. 28, j. 195, p. 9852, 9853). *Changbian* recounts how in 1041 Ye would be ousted by "the chancellor(s)", presumably Lü, for allegedly forming a faction independent of the 'good men' with other officials, some of the same examination year (CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3127).

²⁹³ Han Yi (father to Han Wei and Han Jiang), after Fan's second dismissal in 1036, and in the context of the ban on Fan's faction, tried to disassociate himself from Fan and a secret recommendation that the latter allegedly had made

Notwithstanding their own possible backroom dealing, in their public declarations, the ‘good men’ pointed out that the problem of too little public debate was also tied to a general decline of public political institutions and procedures. Sun Mian 孫沔 (996–1066), a less prominent member, criticized in two memorials dated 12/1034 that after an auspicious start and some setbacks, the emperor nowadays too rarely attended to government affairs in the public setting of the morning audience, severely limiting the access to him for people from the outside, that is, for officials; in this way he relinquished his hold on power for the benefit of eunuchs, women, and evil people; Sun Mian also insisted that despite a recent outrageous case of misconduct, the road to remonstrance could not be blocked by being too harsh on officials who abuse the privilege of speaking up, otherwise people below would not dare to ‘talk about things’, depriving the court of vital information;²⁹⁴ Han Qi offered a similar observation about the institutions at Renzong’s court in the following memorial, somewhat tentatively dated to 5/1039:

Since the founders of the dynasty, [emperors] have personally decided the myriad matters of government, [but] all the things concerning rewards and punishments, as well as appointments, needed to be publicly discussed with the important ministers of the two drafting groups (*liang zhi*) in the outer court, and in case there were rescripts from the inner palace, all of them exclusively emanated from the intention of the emperor. Only since the days when Empress Dowager Liu has acted as a regent, there were subsequently officials of the ilk that struggles for wealth and fame, who corrupted the public proceedings, taking advantage of the imperial relatives, availing themselves of their contacts to palace women, to either hand in a missive [directly] to the inner palace, or to just orally make a request. This led to [the cases] of illicitly seeking one’s fortune becoming more by the day, rewards and punishments that were meted out went against what was just, and the law was unable to check those who committed crimes; rank and salary did not have the capacity to exhort [officials] to render meritorious service. The habit of directly granting office without going through the proper administrative procedure, called *xiefeng* 斜封, during Tang, as well as today’s inside missives bypassing proper administrative channels, both led to the institutional fabric being corrupted and destroyed, and the harm they cause[d] is very grave.

for him (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2784). Aside from a renewal of the warning against officials forming factions, a personal warning “from the inner palace” is issued by the emperor to those who continued to recommend Fan Zhongyan for office, alleging that Fan actually had been dismissed for secretly scheming to establish a brother or nephew as an heir (1038). It is impossible to ascertain the veracity of his claim (CB. vol. 5, j. 122, p. 2881).

²⁹⁴ CB. vol. 5, j. 115, p. 2709–2712. The second of the two memorials is also rather programmatic in its call for getting rid of bad and inefficient officials inside and outside of the capital. The memorialist was demoted as a consequence of the first memorial, it probably seemed to much like a defense of Fan and company. Sun Mian returns in 1040, when Fan also was promoted again (CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3009).

Your Majesty in your sagely virtue makes daily progress, wholeheartedly devoting yourself to the act of governing, it is only this long-standing issue that is [allowed] to go on and one has not gotten rid of; in all humility I say that it in all certainty cannot be the sage intention of Your Majesty, that you are listening to their presumptuous requests, and then, after these have been issued to the public, they will be stopped due to the memorials of those in charge of it (the matter). Unfortunately inside missives bypassing the administration might come one after the other, and then could not be talked about and corrected one by one. I wish to ask to especially hand down an edict, that from now on a personal official rank would be conferred to all those of the imperial relatives in residence in a palace compound, exclusively allowing them to memorialize in the inner palace; other than that, the relatives by marriage or the civil and military ministers, if they have something to request and report, all should depend on the memorial reception staff to convey these to the appropriate subordinate officials to dismiss it or process it to be handed in in the [proper, official] form; under no circumstances are they allowed to have it approved and decreed in the inner palace. If however [somebody] dares to avail himself of an opportunity to ask for a favor, and goes so far as to himself plead in the inner palace to be granted a directive out of order, then I hope one would hand [the memorial down to the proper offices with] his name [attached],²⁹⁵ treating him the same way as someone making a request [through the proper channels], and also send [the case] to the appropriate offices to impeach him, administering heavy punishment. For violators, if there is a verdict it must be implemented [without pardon], in this way, then the sagely government knows no private interest, and the court plans and policies follow the proper order.²⁹⁶

Han Qi here is careful to assure us that the final decision will remain with the emperor, the public sphere in Han's normative model merely is the place and institutional setting in which good decisions are made, not the entity that makes the decision. While limited to high-ranking court institutions, public and institutionalized procedures provide an institutional safeguard that, by ways of administrative and public scrutiny of memorials and suggestions, ensures that the decisions based on them are made free from illicit, secret influence, presumably leading to the best outcome. Note that it is not the hierarchically higher chancellery (*zhongshusheng* 中書省) that is the body that should discuss these things, but the *liang zhi* 兩制, the 'two drafting groups',

²⁹⁵ Note that 降出 is a technical term for memorials receiving an official reply from the emperor through the proper channels, as opposed to being held back in the inner palace. HYDCD. vol. 11, p. 963.

²⁹⁶ CB. vol. 5, j. 123, p. 2904-2905 (5/1039). Sun Mian would repeat this criticism in 1041, down to citing the same bad Tang-precedents (CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3126). In a later memorial, Yin Zhu all but repeats this criticism of Tang *xiefeng* in intercal. 9/1042, suggesting that there was some coordination (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3297). Fu Bi points to different institutional problems when he laments that minor border officials these days are not granted audiences, as they had been before (1039); he claims that granting such audiences would enhance the court's knowledge of the border and tie the official to the emperor in his gratitude for this token of his taking an interest. In other words, the latter is a ritual aspect of the audience (CB. vol. 5, j. 124, p. 2933-34; in 1040, Fu Bi made a similar call for access to the emperor for people's reports on the border situation. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2992) He also made the argument for an institutional unification of the military commission and the chancellery, to foster institutional coherence in times of crisis (2/1040; CB. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2975). In 1040, a hall is ordered to be specifically built in the military commission in order to discuss border affairs, after Yan Shu suggested that vice chancellors should participate in discussions about border affairs (CB. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2992). At the same time, Fu Bi also accuses the current chancellors of being too lazy to decide certain things, relegating these to others instead (CB. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2993).

which included the academicians and thus broadened the participation in these discussions. At the same time, as with Fan Zhongyan's suggestion about ritual change that contrary to his protestations would have actually endangered the status of Empress Dowager Liu, this memorial has a less apparent thrust as well: a process of imperial decision-making that were to be public and institutionalized would also impede the emperor's liberty to give in to different supplicants in his decision-making, and, almost more importantly, to change his decisions afterwards and implicitly place the blame for the mistake on the supplicant; the current obscurity of the process that Han criticized did not just encourage supplication, but also shielded the emperor from public scrutiny. Lü Yijian in many ways is the best example for this aspect of the institutional situation – vilified by the 'good men' and the historical record for his backroom dealing and puppeteering, he was not just a player attacking his rivals and apparently winning the day both in 1033 and 1036, but also was played himself. In fact, when looking past the involvement of the 'villain' Lü Yijian, the whole issue in 1033 had been about access to the emperor, and the opportunity to publicly debate in front of him: the group of censors had been denied entry, and demanded to be heard, and instead of confronting them in person, the emperor apparently had delegated the task to Lü Yijian, so that he rather than himself would be shown up. Lü Yijian lost the argument, but won the day by complaining that what the censors had done was not in keeping with the great peace (*taiping*); rather than the opportunity to continue their impertinence in the presence of the emperor, Fan and the others received their dismissal, and similar censorial performances were prohibited.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ CB. vol. 5, j. 113, p. 2648-2649.

Despite being slightly out of chronological order, the following memorial by Ouyang Xiu, variously dated to 1042 or 1043, should be discussed here, since it elaborates on this point:

I respectfully have heard that at the times of the dynastic founders, an institutional arrangement of the Han and Tang dynasties was still in use, in that each time when there were important affairs of the army or the state, or harsh punishments and lawsuits [to decide], invariably the officials of all ranks would be assembled in order to participate in the discussion [about the decision]. This surely was done because [even] a sage is cautious in overseeing affairs and does not dare to exclusively rely on a single opinion; he intends to gather the public opinion of the realm, so as to choose what is good among it, in order to make up for the inadequacies [in his] thinking. The [institutional] form in which nowadays the dynasty discusses things, in contradiction to the intention of the dynastic founders, [is that] each time there is an important matter it is kept a secret, not letting people in on it. Only small matters, those that could be decided single-handedly, instead are sent to the two drafting groups (*liang zhi*) for the deciding debate. The two drafting groups are aware that these are not pressing matters, therefore they neglect them and put them off frequently for several years; those one or two matters that sometimes are among them that are important get neglected in the same way as the smaller matters.

As to the important affairs, to keep them secret and not publicize them is very inexpedient. At the beginning of dealing with an issue, even the ranks of the academicians attending [to the emperor] are not let in on it. After it has been put into practice, the issue necessarily will become apparent and widely known; suppose that there are mistakes in it, and one now wants to discuss them point by point, then to do so after the fact will be too late. Moreover, those scattered and far away officials outside of court, although they want to have a say, how can the emperor receive and make use of their [opinions]? The reason why armed conflicts have been on the rise for several years, and why those numerous affairs in both the west and the north that needed to be taken care of for the most part have been blundered, invariably is because the great ministers themselves have neither plan nor reason, and keep the public from seeing it.

Today I would like to plead that every time there is an important matter concerning the state or the military, [important] to the degree that the outer court must know it and it cannot be kept secret, such as whether to agree to [new terms for the] peace [accord] or not when there was a request [for these] last year by the Northern Looters, or whether to accept it or not when the Western Tribesmen this year sued for peace, matters like these ones, all should be handed down to the officials of all ranks for a court discussion, pursuant to the differences and similarities of their opinions, each should be ordered to compose a report, and Your Majesty then chooses what is best from them and implements it. Not only will one be cautious and prudent with important affairs, and supplement [one's views] by gathering the views of the public, at the same time one can also, among the people of lower rank, the poor and lowly, and the scattered and far-away, on the occasion of a debate, see those of high talent and intelligence among them, for the state to be able to make [better] use of them. If [among the views] of the officials of all ranks there is nothing that is good enough, then [the emperor] personally holds a court-hall discussion.

As to the small matters, I summarily ask that they be only referred to the two administrations (*liang fu* 兩府, chancellery and military commission) to be decided autonomously. Their financing and accounting should regard the fundamental as well as the minute, therefore one then summons officials of the financial commission to the two administrations, to discuss and determine supply and distribution, and lets the great ministers choose themselves [how to deal with these issues]. As to the rites and law, one can also summon rites and law officials to inquire. If one acts like that, then the important and the unimportant of the matters, each get their due institutional form [of decision making]. If what I request is granted, then I beg that in the matter of the Western Tribesmen seeking peace, one first assembles the officials of all ranks for a court discussion.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ 論乞令百官議事劄子. QSW. vol. 32, j. 680, p. 115. The following one appears to make a similar argument, if only for the censors. There are two dates given, in different editions, *qingli* 2 or 3. Note that either way it probably was at a time when the *liang fu* – the chancellery and the military commission – were co-led by the same officials.

Fan Zhongyan earlier had spoken about the concept of the public from the angle of personal ethics, of how officials should act in the political arena, while Ouyang Xiu here concentrates on the institutional side of the problem: when important issues were kept from general knowledge until it is too late, and when the proper institutions were only used to decide minor issues, then this was a faulty institutional arrangement that in all probability had caused the current border crisis. Like in Han Qi's case, the public for Ouyang Xiu is not making the decision, however, giving it an institutional place in the process of decision-making ensures that the comprehensive information and diverse suggestions are provided that enable the ruler to make the right call. The public for Ouyang consists of a plurality of suggestions and opinions, which, however, is not seen as a problem; it is actually feasible for Ouyang Xiu that the request for suggestions from the ranks of officials will yield no usable result, in which case a discussion in the court hall in the presence of the emperor might do the trick. Like with Han Qi's earlier suggestion, Ouyang Xiu here tried to put the current hierarchy of access to government decision-making on its head: this arrangement in fact would all but neutralize the influence of other high officials in the *liang fu*, which would be relegated to deciding the small and unimportant issues that hitherto had been handed over to the deliberating institutions. It is likely that the concrete goal of this memorial was to prevent a peace agreement with the Xia by keeping the high officials, and ultimately the emperor, from monopolizing the decision, exposing his invocation of the ideal of the public as another case in which it served a very concrete political goal.²⁹⁹ Presumably, there were more officials sympathetic to the ideas of the good men among the larger *liang zhi* than in the more limited chancellery. Later, in *qingli* 4 (1/1044), Wang Zhi would criticize the convention

²⁹⁹ See the discussion of Fan's part in the campaign and the issue of peace with Xi Xia before the return of the 'good men' to court: Johanna Fischer, "Fan Chung-yen (989–1052): Das Lebensbild eines chinesischen Staatsmannes." *Oriens Extremus* 2:1-2 (1955). p. 39-85, 142-156. p. 74-85, 142-144.

introduced during the regency that promotion lists would have to be handed in beforehand, allowing the dowager and later the emperor to make up their mind ahead of time, rather than them being discussed and decided when they were presented.³⁰⁰ This led to the situation that officials in charge of personnel were presented with the finalized imperial order during the audience, and accordingly did not dare to argue for changes that would reflect the actual record of the candidates. Note that Wang Zhi according to his biography in 1036 had made a point of socializing with Fan Zhongyan and seeing him off despite the current ban on his faction, but overall is not known to be a close member of the political group.³⁰¹ Therefore it is unclear if this could be considered part of a larger effort of the ‘good men’ to increase their influence over promotions.

When revisiting Habermas, the similarities of the case at hand to his narrative of the European public sphere are striking, if we indeed consider them political and normative arguments, rather than a description of historic-normative reality. We have a group of literati which starts out debating literary production, and then extends and adapts the arguments from this discussion to the political realm as well.³⁰² Fan in the early letter states clearly that he considers his status in the hierarchy to be lowly and unimportant, and yet he claims his rightful place in a public of

³⁰⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3530.

³⁰¹ When being reprimanded by someone for it, he supposedly replied that “Fan is a sage, were I to be able to become [a member of his] faction, that would be fortuitous indeed.” (SS. vol. 26, j. 269, p. 9244-5. Similar passage: CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2784). Fan authored Wang Zhi’s epitaph, which contains a different version of the story without mentioning that it referred to Fan himself (QSW. vol. 19, j. 389, p. 47-51). In other words, there are ample signs that there was a social connection between Wang Zhi and the ‘good men’.

³⁰² Habermas describes how the political bourgeois public comes into being by making use of the existing institutions of a literary public – this is not to say that the process is exactly the same, or that the institutions are, notably the burgeoning newspapers are missing. However, there is no reason to believe that different institutions could not fulfill the same function. Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 114-116.

officials working for the common good; while the public remains rather limited in practice between Han Qi's court administrative public and the wider public of officials "scattered far and away" that Ouyang Xiu talks about, at least in the latter case it in theory is very much edging towards a claim to universality by his reference to "the public opinion of all under heaven." Accordingly, the point made by Schirokauer and Hymes that during Song the term 公 *gong* always referred to the government is validated for the case of Han Qi's memorial, where one could argue that it indeed is merely a public government institution that he is referring to and wants to have revived, although it is its public, non-secretive nature that makes it normatively better than the alternative;³⁰³ however, the 'all under heaven' context of Ouyang Xiu's use of the word, as well as the reference to scattered outside officials suggests that at the very least he had made a large step towards locating it at a middle level, in between proper government hierarchy and the private realm. Terminology aside, already in Fan Zhongyan's letter the differentiation between a public that is the government and one that is not gets blurred when he claims a role for a lowly official like himself in such a discursive space; while Fan Zhongyan did tie this duty to speak to his membership of the class of officeholders by virtue of having been recommended and given office, faced with Yan Shu's pulling of rank he at the same time denied that this participation in the 'road of remonstrance' should be subject to government hierarchy and suppression. Again we should remind ourselves that also in the European case, this differentiation between government and public can be difficult and ambiguous in practice. Even in Habermas' exposition the European public's claim to universal access is juxtaposed with the fact that in its heydays the participation was limited to the bourgeois class by practical

³⁰³ Schirokauer, Hymes, "Introduction," in: *Ordering the World*. p. 54.

considerations, and thus had to remain an aspiration too.³⁰⁴ A similar differentiation and qualification is possible in the case of an idea such as the private economic arena, the absence of which due to the Confucian distrust of private economic activity is one of the common arguments against a public sphere in China; Schirokauer and Hymes on the contrary explain that one can not only find the concept in other terminology than the word *si* 私 that ‘private’ is usually tied to, a word that due to its assumed negative connotation in fact commonly is translated as ‘selfish’, but according to their findings *si* indeed could also take on neutral or positive meanings.³⁰⁵ In other words, there is considerable overlap between what Habermas purports to merely describe as the preliminary stages of publicness, and what these Song literati claim, so much so that it should be possible to talk of them as two historically specific cases of the development of a similar, comparable claim. And yet, despite the normative sense that the ‘good men’ ascribe to their public as a tool to good decision making, against private interests, and to curb the absolute position of the emperor, they do not claim that it *makes* the right decisions in and of itself, like the notion of public rationality that is all but innate to the fully developed argument in the European case;³⁰⁶ it remains at the functional level of controlling excesses of power and selfishness, a function that according to Habermas even a Prussian King could appreciate, if only to keep his own administration in check.³⁰⁷ For Habermas, this is a sign

³⁰⁴ He points to historic illiteracy and poverty as a limitation in earlier centuries, and later adds that the fact that everybody could in theory become a Bürger and gain the economic status to participate in the bourgeois public sphere is enough to back up the universal claim. Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 99, 156-158.

³⁰⁵ Schirokauer, Hymes, “Introduction,” in: *Ordering the World*. p. 52-54. For Habermas, the concept of the Private is extremely important as the dialectic precondition, counterpoint, and origin of the Public Sphere. Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 86-90, 107-116.

³⁰⁶ Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 119-120. However, Habermas describes the many forms that this claim could take with the different thinkers in the European case.

³⁰⁷ Habermas, *Strukturwandel* (1990). p. 155.

that ideas about the general value of publicness had become widespread and generally accepted, albeit a public that here was not supposed, or able to fulfill the normative promise that he makes for it, namely to make the best decision all by itself, for that would still be the prerogative of the king or emperor. In other words, in one important aspect the claims that we see appearing in the 1030s and 1040s are more similar to the precursors, rather than to Habermas' rational public sphere itself.

It goes without saying that statements concerning the situation or the publicness of court proceedings need to be taken with a grain of salt when they come from a group with a political stake in public debates. The claim in the sources that (censorial) officials did not dare to speak up is somewhat diminished in its credibility by the fact, discussed above, that it was followed by reports about quite a few officials who did take a public stance, and duly were dismissed for it. There were in fact some public voices against the 'good men', and allegedly in favor of Lü Yijian, which, however, were reported only in a disparaging manner.³⁰⁸ At certain times, calls for advice were issued, and received responses.³⁰⁹ There is also no reason to agree with the 'good men's' claim that these public debates had worked as they were supposed to at earlier points in the dynasty, or that the current problems therefore were only the result of the regency, and thus

³⁰⁸ In 1036, by a certain Liu Ping (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2788); the request to publish a list of Fan's faction in the government hall was also attributed to a sycophant to Lü (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2784).

³⁰⁹ One example would be in 1034 (CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2660). For what seems to be Li Shu's response, discussed below, see p. 2663-67. On occasion of several unusual natural phenomena, financial commissioners and similar officials are asked to make suggestions in 1038 (CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2854), several responses on the following pages by Song Qi (p. 2854-56), Su Shen (p. 2857-58), Ye Qingchen (p. 2858-60), brief lists by Zhang Fangping (p. 2860) and Zhang Guan (p. 2860), as well as a longer memorial by Han Qi (p. 2861-64).

the fault of the empress dowager.³¹⁰ And yet, what they criticized from their idealistic point of view appears not to have been entirely without grounding in historical reality, given that memorialists without apparent close association to Fan Zhongyan offered a similar analysis regarding the deterioration of institutional and administrative procedure at court: in 4/1033 it was actually Lü Yijian, the ‘nemesis’ of the ‘good men’ himself, who, in the major part of an itemized memorial on occasion of Renzong’s personal reign, had indirectly attested to these problems when he proposed to “rectify the institutional fabric” and put an end to backroom dealing, bribery, and sycophancy.³¹¹ In 12/1033, some nine months after the dowager’s death, Renzong had complained about his workload of reading memorials; while offering his indignant protest when being advised by Lü Yijian to only deal with important matters personally, the episode does seem to indicate that Renzong did not relish the administrative, institutional duties that came with his position.³¹² Wu Yu 吳育 (1004–1058) pointed out in 1038 that in recent years there had been too many secret or anonymous memorials, which should be strictly forbidden.³¹³ While the political relationship of Wu Yu to Fan Zhongyan does not appear to have been easy and straightforward, note that he still is described in his biography as given to speaking out about matters, suggesting more commonality with Fan Zhongyan than the political discord between them would suggest.

³¹⁰ Skonicki describes institutional changes and decline since the late Taizong reign and under Zhenzong that would have facilitated this alleged change for the worse, with less contact and access between emperor and broad officialdom/public at court; in his view these changes presented an opportunity for chancellors such as Wang Dan to exercise more power. Skonicki, “Employing the right kind of men.” p. 51-56.

³¹¹ CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2613.

³¹² CB. vol. 5, j. 113, p. 2646. The remainder of the exchange tries to exhibit the frugal attitude of the emperor, and rescue the situation in this way.

³¹³ CB. vol. 5, j. 123, p. 2899. Wu Yu is on record for going against Fan Zhongyan, while selectively implementing his requests on another occasion (SS. vol. 28, j. 291, p. 9732). However, he joins the ‘good men’ in a political attack on Li Shu (CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3459).

In fact, this is an opportunity to temporarily forego the earlier injunction against attempting to provide quantifiable evidence for publicness, if not for one text, but for the court proceedings of an era: a very simple search of terms that introduce direct speech by the emperor in the records of the *Changbian* would appear to support the contention that Renzong was a less ‘public’, less ‘hands on’ emperor than those before or after him, with less recorded instances of him directly interacting with his court in this way, and a tendency to address his closest ministers and chancellors instead.³¹⁴ Thus, without the need to wholly accept the normative claims that the ‘good men’ connected with their observations, there is some corroboration for the argument that in general public proceedings and unscripted interactions with the emperor at court had been in decline, a decline allegedly caused by the specific historic circumstances of the Renzong reign and the preceding regency by Empress Dowager Liu. The traditionally critical attitude of Confucian scholars towards female government led to numerous attempts of curbing her influence, not just by Fan Zhongyan, leading in turn to efforts on her part to at the same time placate officials, rope them in, and keep them at bay.³¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising that a

³¹⁴

Table 1	Taizu/Taizong 960–997	Zhenzong 997–1022	Renzong pre- <i>qingli</i> 1022–1040	post- <i>qingli</i> 1041–1063	Yingzong 1063–1067	Shenzong 1067–1085
years of reign	15/22	25	18 [11 under reg.]	22	4 [1]	18
<i>juan</i> in <i>Changbian</i>	17/25	57	30	70	10	154
occurrence of:						
上言	24/58	171	39	104	15	168
上問	9/9	27	16	15	8	83
上調輔臣	0/3	72	39	44	1	24
上諭輔臣	0/0	2	7	3	0	4

The table was compiled using an electronic version of the *Changbian*. The term 上問輔臣 occurs very rarely, with the majority (4 out of 9) under Renzong; 上言輔臣 does not occur. The terms 上諭輔臣 and 上調輔臣 appear to refer to interactions with the emperor’s closest ministers and chancellors only.

³¹⁵ Again, see the description by Chaffee for details, especially p. 16, where he points out the heightened consciousness about her status (Chaffee, “The Rise of Empress Liu.” p. 16).

female regent conscious of power would prefer a mix of backroom decisions and ritual ceremonies of submission to more open, possibly more unpredictable court debates, during which the screen that shielded her from the eyes of the presenting officials also limited her ability to participate, highlighted the unusual nature of her status and power, and made her vulnerable to surprises if the proceedings were not orchestrated in advance.

Emperor Renzong, the longest-ruling emperor of the Northern Song Dynasty, had spent his formative years from 13 to 24 *sui* not just witnessing Dowager Liu's way of ruling, but indeed being made a part of Dowager Liu's ritual displays, such as in the case of the ritual for the dowager's birthday and the winter solstice mentioned above; already in 1026 he, presumably, was called on to publicly beg for permission to lead the officials in their prostrations before the empress dowager in the coming year; it speaks to the twisted realities of Dowager Liu's way of securing her power that she first denied permission, ostensibly to display the female modesty that the officials wanted to see, and then had him do it anyway.³¹⁶ Even after her death the emperor had to suffer the humiliation of Liu attempting to install her confidante, Lady Yang, through her last will as her successor in the regency, not to speak of the matter of his biological mother.³¹⁷ Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the young emperor, too, would adopt the way of ruling that Dowager Liu had deemed necessary to secure her status in an environment hostile to female rule.

³¹⁶ SS. vol. 1, j. 9 (*benji*), p. 182-183.

³¹⁷ CB. vol. 5, j. 102, p. 2609. The following entries about Lady Yang make it sound as if the last will actually had been implemented at first, note also that Lady Yang apparently kept her 'Dowager' title even after her actual regency did not materialize (CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2611, 2614-15).

For the period of the regency and the early Renzong reign, Christian Lamouroux has argued that the rise of civil officials led to the emergence of a new way of connecting historical writing, including perceived ancestral regulations, to imperial power, ascribing an important role to literati as arbiters, and writers of history, while legitimizing imperial rule in the process.³¹⁸ The author himself accedes to the fact that this argument about a consensus between ruler and literati leaves out the tensions and struggles between them and among literati themselves that would soon ensue, and maintains that this is a useful way of describing the change between the early Song and the 11th century, as a development that opened the door for the things to come. For the purposes of our narrative, however, the appearance of this political-intellectual consensus achieved under Renzong needs to be qualified in two important ways: firstly, the role of Empress Dowager Liu in giving this role to literati deserves to be highlighted more, for quite a number of the lectures and compilations that Lamouroux discusses happened under her tutelage, which fits well with the point that she made an active attempt to placate officials and secure her rule in different ways.³¹⁹ This would diminish the role of Renzong in this development, who appears to have merely extended and enlarged the program for his own purposes, rather than initiating it. Secondly, however, it will become clear that, at least from the perspective of our ‘faction of good men’, this more important role for literati and their expertise at court had remained a promise fulfilled in form but not in fact under both the regency and Renzong’s personal rule. Seen from this angle, the overtures the rulers made towards literati, and the changes they initiated indeed paved the way for later developments, but the degree to which the arbitrations of these public procedures and institutions would translate into concrete policies and direct literati influence

³¹⁸ Lamouroux, “Song Renzong’s Court Landscape.” p. 87-89.

³¹⁹ See the tables provided: Lamouroux, “Song Renzong’s Court Landscape.” p. 90-93.

remained a bone of contention, and in this way at the same time provided the historical dynamic that drove the subsequent events.

A specific example of a public procedure will serve to elaborate on this point: namely, public calls by the emperor for policy suggestions, and itemized responses to such calls. This example will also turn out to be very relevant for our discussion of the ‘good men’s’ own response to such a call for suggestions in 1043, the famous ‘Ten-Point Program’ mentioned several times now. To appreciate what happened later, we will here look at such public calls and the resulting political programs as a genre of political procedure, and separate the form from its content for a moment. We have seen that the ‘good men’ had a tendency to praise frank words, and there are several instances prior to *qingli* 3 where they handed in itemized proposals,³²⁰ yet, of course neither calls for proposals nor point by point programs were their prerogative.³²¹ In fact, it was not an uncommon form for concrete suggestions, such as for border policies,³²² but also to provide more sweeping analysis of the ills of the world and possible solutions on occasion of different events

³²⁰ E.g. Fan Zhongyan in 1033: CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2623. Note the instance of Ouyang Xiu doing so in 5/1042, talking about three evils to be reformed and five matters of reform and policy. While appearing to be covering the same range of problems that he would cover in ‘On Fundamentals’, like in the other text there is also a clear internal hierarchy, if somewhat different, focusing on military matters and the border, getting the right men as officials and generals, and tackling the three evils that prevented officialdom from being incentivized to function efficiently (being careful with orders; making rewards and punishments consistent/clear; requiring real achievements). The financial problems do feature as one item on the list, but are clearly underdeveloped, as there is only one suggestion, i.e. decreasing the size of the army (CB. vol. 6, j. 136, p. 3251-3259).

³²¹ See the small overview over Renzong’s calls for advice provided by Michael McGrath, “The Reigns of Jen-tsung (1022–1063) and Ying-tsung (1063–1067),” in: Denis Twitchett, Paul J. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 279-346. p. 324-25.

³²² For example, the list provided by Xia Song also lists border policies in 1039: CB. vol. 5, j. 123, p. 2912-13; different version: QSW. vol. 17, j. 346, p. 57-64; see also another one by Jia Changchao, not part of the political ‘good men’, in 1042 (CB. vol. 6, j. 138, p. 3316-3320). The emperor accepted it with the formula *jiana* 嘉納, ‘accepted with admiration’. There is a ‘ritual’ connection to his family, though, since Fan appears to have written an epitaph for Jia’s brother or cousin (QSW. vol. 19, j. 389, p. 51-54).

such as natural phenomena, promotions, changes in reign title, or when the emperor started to exercise power in his own right:³²³

When the emperor started to oversee government affairs in person, Lü Yijian personally made a memorial itemizing eight policies, which were ‘to rectify the institutional fabric at court; put a stop to improper routes [of communication]; forbid bribery; reveal crafty sycophancy; cut off [the channels of communication] for people asking favors from court via palace women; disperse the sycophants to the emperor; abolish the corvée [of manual labor], and reduce redundancies and expenses;’ this advice was very similar to what the emperor had said. With Lü the emperor made the plan to summarily dismiss Zhang Qi, Xia Song, and the others who had been employed in [high] office by the empress dowager. When the emperor retreated and told Empress Guo of this, the empress said: ‘how come Lü Yijian was the only one not close to the Empress Dowager? He is merely more crafty, good at adapting to changes.’ Thereupon Lü was also dismissed.³²⁴

There is not enough information to assess the exact details of the proposal, in fact, it is precisely the point that further details are missing, let alone any discussion about the merits and demerits of, e.g. the suggestion about the corvée duty; however, the passage shows that even an official completely unknown for his reformist tendencies would feel the need to make a list of improvements in government, however limited and commonplace they were. At the same time the episode highlights a major disadvantage of these proposals: they were politically dangerous, in this case prompting Empress Guo to launch an attack, potentially due to Lü’s suggestions concerning palace women, but possibly merely for sticking his head out and giving her the opportunity to do so. It was this incident that started the feud between the two that only ended when Guo was dismissed in turn – purportedly at the indirect instigation of Lü.³²⁵ In other words, any concrete measure in such a proposal could alert a special interest at court to one’s plans and lead to an attack and political infighting.

³²³ Again, the 1038 example for a call for advice and a series of responses should be mentioned: CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2854-2864. See also a series of policy proposals by Xia Song, another ‘enemy’ of the reform (QSW. vol. 17, j. 344-346, p. 30-64). This also includes a list of ten policies regarding the border, a very common genre.

³²⁴ (4/1033) CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2613.

³²⁵ CB. vol. 5, j. 113, p. 2648.

And yet, there were also programs that had less dire consequences for the author: possibly constituting a response to a call to hand in proposals on occasion of the first change of the reign title after the end of the regency,³²⁶ in 1034 the *zhizhigao* 知制誥 [drafter] Li Shu 李淑 (1002–1059) handed in a detailed ten-part proposal.³²⁷ It must be emphasized that the main point to make here is not even that both of these point-by-point programs contained observations and suggestions that the ‘good men’ could agree with and would, in different form, have in their own programs later, as remarkable as that might be in and of itself;³²⁸ in the case of Lü Yijian’s program we have already seen some of the general calls for getting rid of backroom dealing, and strengthening the institutional fabric, which would be made in similar form later on by the ‘good men’; in the latter proposal by Li Shu, the diagnosis that imperial orders (for promotions) were not heeded and that long-term plans not made, as well as the general argument for a reform of examinations and promotions appear quite similar to what would be said later by Fan and his circle. Li also included calls for frugality and limiting the number of officials, while at the same time making sure that good ones would be promoted out of cycle by a special committee. In addition, Li Shu suggested the revival of the rituals of ‘review of the army’, ‘reading the seasonal decrees’ and ‘entering the hall’, without, however, giving much of a philosophical explanation

³²⁶ CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2660.

³²⁷ CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2663-7.

³²⁸ Although that is not that remarkable from the perspective of Lamouroux’ argument, for he describes a wider use of these concepts and ideas beyond the immediate circle that we have called ‘the good men’ here, although not unconnected to them, namely through the circle of Chao Jiong, Yan Shu, and Li Shu. For Chao Jiong and ‘perfect integrity/utmost sincerity’, see Lamouroux, “Song Renzong’s Court Landscape.” p. 70; Yan Shu and Li Shu emphasizing the importance of the emperor personally selecting good officials, and the role of ‘perfect integrity’ in that, see p.76-77. As Lamouroux argues there is also a somewhat Machiavellian argument floating around, which puts the interest of imperial power before moral questions, or publicness, for that matter (p. 82-84), a contention that the ‘good men’ probably would have more trouble to subscribe to openly, although we will see that the thought that the end justified the means is not absent from their political acts at all. From the perspective of this narrative, the ‘good men’ around Fan Zhongyan did not ‘invent’ these things, and had their own models that they agreed and disagreed with.

for that, other than very general ideas of strengthening military preparation, and responding to the warnings of heaven.³²⁹ The most concrete and spectacular of his proposals suggested what would amount to the abolition of the personal exam administered by the emperor in its current form, as well as the discontinuation of another type of exam administered by the emperor, the *bacui*, ‘Preeminent Talent’ special exam, while also freezing the quotas for exams at a level that reflected open positions, and making both promotions and examinations stricter by improving supervision. All of these were rather limited responses to the fundamental problems to begin with. To answer the question of his allegiance to the ‘good men’, the third proposal turns out to be most enlightening, in which he observes:

His third suggestion discussed talking about things: Your Majesty is overseeing the court in a transparent and enlightened fashion, and asks for and accepts loyal and righteous [advice]. But as for the officials who offer opinions, many of them resort to forgery and exaggeration, and wantonly engage in slander; they neither heed principle nor way, carelessly they show off their wisdom and pretension, they scheme to mislead [your] intelligence, and have their mind on self-promotion; under the fake name of hating evil, they hand in texts and inundate you with documents, so that you have to reply, only then will they stop. They sell off their own straightness, putting the blame on the ruler and father, how can they assist with Your Majesty’s intention of inquiring and accepting [advice]?³³⁰

It seems very likely that this is a reference to Fan Zhongyan, who only recently had been dismissed for reprimanding the emperor in the affair about the dismissal of Empress Guo. This, together with the different style of the text, and other evidence provided by his demotion to a lower academic post in 9/1043, after an attack by Ouyang Xiu and Cai Xiang, who accused him to be in league with Lü Yijian, allows us to infer that the political and ideological relationship certainly was not close.³³¹ And yet, true to the by now familiar pattern preventing us from making definitive statements about the relationship between most of our actors, on the other

³²⁹ CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2666-67.

³³⁰ CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2664-65.

³³¹ Attacks by Ouyang Xiu: QSW. vol. 32, j. 681, p. 141-143. CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3448-3449. Final demotion of Li Shu: p. 3459. Cai Xiang’s attack: QSW. vol. 46, j. 1000, p. 329. The larger issue was Li Shu’s conduct as prefect of Kaifengfu.

hand there is also a record of friendly, more personal correspondence between Li Shu and Ouyang Xiu about Ouyang's progress on the New History of the Five dynasties, aside from the indirect connection through Yan Shu and Chao Jiong 晁迥 (951–1034) that we have mentioned above.³³²

Regardless of Li Shu's exact relationship to the good men at the time when he wrote the memorial in 1034, the point to be made here is that his and Lü Yijian's programs largely remained performative acts and empty words; they were expressions of a promise of public participation in policy-making that were used to legitimize imperial power, but remained unfulfilled in practice at this point.³³³ When Lü Yijian came back to power after his ouster he did not or could not strengthen the institutional system at court, instead allegedly contributing to its erosion with his own backroom dealing. Li Shu's reformist proposals, even in the already limited form they took, for all we know were without consequences, except for the abolition of the *bacui* literary exam, which only affected a limited number of literati to begin with,³³⁴ and some technical changes to the recruitment and exam system, e.g. presumably reinstating the Han Dynasty way of recommending capable officials that Li Shu had referred to. However, we know

³³² QSW. vol. 33, j. 699, p. 93. The mention of the *Xin Wudai shi* and information provided in the letter would put its date around 1039, but it is curious that the QSW refrains from dating the letter drawing on that. For connection through Chao Jiong: Lamouroux, "Song Renzong's Court Landscape." p. 69.

³³³ Lamouroux talks about the public aspect of this offer for literati to participate in, discuss, and promote imperial power, that I call a mere promise. Lamouroux, "Song Renzong's Court Landscape." p. 84, 87.

³³⁴ For the abolishment, see *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 選舉一〇/試判/仁宗/景祐元年. p. 選舉一〇之三. Here we also see that the reference to the 'personal examining' in the record of the *Changbian* must refer to this exam only (CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2663), which was indeed administered by the emperor, and not to the more important palace exam. The last numbers of examinees were 30 and 24 in 1031 and 1030, respectively, with the 'good men' Yu Jing and Yin Zhu graduates of this examination in 1030. *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 選舉一〇/試判/仁宗/天聖八年, 天聖九年, 景祐元年. p. 選舉一〇之三.

of no effect that these had on the actual number of officials and candidates, and, to make matters worse, the two sources that report these changes are not quite in congruence with each other as to their exact content;³³⁵ despite the fact that the *Changbian* passage actually could be interpreted to suggest that the personal examination by the emperor, that is, the palace exam proper, was abolished in the current form, there was no such change, or even a reduction in passing grades, since according to the sources the number of that year's successful candidates in that exam in fact doubled relative to those before or after.³³⁶ Note also that Li Shu was among the examiners for the *jinshi*-exam in 1034, which passed a record number of 662 *jinshi*, probably for the same celebratory reasons that prompted the request for suggestions in the first place.³³⁷ In this case and others, the act of calling for suggestions, and the detailed response, therefore for the most part remained a political performance, meant to give public proof that the emperor did his duty of governing and ordering the world at a point when the new reign period advertised to the realm that he was governing on his own. Here, part of that performance also included the token implementation of minor parts of the proposal, abolishing one type of exam that was all but

³³⁵ Without mentioning Li Shu, this record seems to be similar to the *Changbian*, but not quite the same: *Song huiyao* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 選舉一〇/制科一/仁宗/景祐元年. p. 選舉一〇之二一. CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2663. Between the two, the provision about officials going to the border and outlying provinces changes from being an excluding limitation for the participation in the 'Han-style' recommendation and other 'exams' in *Changbian*, to this group being *permitted* to take the Maocai exam, as well as the other three subjects and the military exam in *Huiyao*.

³³⁶ The argument offered by Li Shu was that the palace exam yielded too many candidates that were not tested properly in this procedure, because of how the exam was set up, with only one sitting, and overseen by the emperor personally. We learn from the *Huiyao* that what in *Changbian* appears to affect the *bacui* and the palace exam probably referred to the *bacui* exam alone (see note above), because it fails to record any changes for the palace exam, and of course we also see the continued documentation for the latter. For this year the number of passed candidates is 716, as opposed to 250 in 1030 and 311 in 1038. In other words, if indeed there was any change in this year, this had no effect on the competitiveness of the exam, and presumably on the quality of the candidates, because it passed twice as much candidates as before and after. *Song huiyao* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 選舉七/親試一/舉士十三/仁宗/天聖八年, 景祐元年, 景祐五年. p. 選舉七之一五-六.

³³⁷ *Song huiyao* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 選舉/選舉一/貢舉一/仁宗/天聖八年, 景祐元年, 景祐五年. p. 選舉一之一〇. There were 402 in 1030, and 500 in 1038.

irrelevant for the larger issue anyway, and changing some technicalities with the others. Even if these changes should have included the grading procedure of the palace exam, the record number of passed exam candidates in both *jinshi*- and palace exam that year shows that neither the emperor nor Li Shu were really interested in or able to lower their number, given that both presumably would have been in a position to heed Li's criticism and put his suggestions into practice in some way or other. In summary, the detailed point-by-point proposals discussed here had largely remained empty words, and even the limited implementation of reforms that did take place had been a part of the performance, and did not have much of an effect on the practical problems that it purported to address.

Given this finding, it is not surprising that the *guwen* protagonists would extend the diagnosis and the remedy for the literary ills of their times to the political realm as well, that is, they would argue for re-forming the connection between outward form and content of the political procedures that supposedly had been lost during the regency. However, for the 'good men' it was not just an institutional problem, but also one of Renzong's personal style of rule that plagued the current times, a point that Han Qi hinted at in a series of memorials in 12/1037, which criticized how the emperor reacted to crises, in this case brought about by natural phenomena:

I have heard that to move the people it takes action, and not words, to respond to heaven it takes real deeds, and not outward form (*wen* 文), this is the great contribution of the previous Confucians. Therefore Duke Jing of Song, when being dazzled and perplexed kept his mind focused, and had no tolerance for being distracted from the faults of [his] subjects, [thus] when Zi Wei praised the ruler with extremely virtuous words, for dazzling and perplexing [the ruler] he was required to go into exile [to a place] 3 leagues away. This then is a demonstration [of how to] respond to heaven with real deeds. Emperor Minghuang of Tang, on account of a solar eclipse, universally ordered to pardon the people sentenced to hard labor, and Song Jing said that one could [only] with complete sincerity move heaven, and not with mere virtuous utterances being handed down in high frequency. This then is the evil of using an outward form to respond to heaven.

[He then reminds the reader of recent inauspicious omens, such as a fire in the palace and unusual celestial phenomena.] At that time, I have said that Your Majesty ought to modestly see to seeking straight advice, to place yourself second and reform the numerous affairs of the state. [Only] if there is success should there be a reward, in order to block the road for those who [get] it merely relying on their good fortune; if there is a crime then there should be punishment, in order to purify the origin of its treachery and evil. Differentiate wise and stupid, exercise

frugality in financial affairs. Cut back on private banquets and music that goes beyond what is proper, refrain from construction, and undertakings that are not called for. Decide penal cases [in a way that] causes them not to be excessive[ly cruel]; issue orders [in a way that] is decisive in ensuring their implementation. This is how to pay tribute to the undertaking of the dynastic founders, and how to respond to the sobering admonishment [proffered] by the heavenly will.

But Your Majesty displayed your special favor to the three capitals by wantonly issuing pardons for its criminals, you [showed your] submission to [natural phenomena such as] mountains, rivers, stars, and quakes, with empty, superficial sacrifices to them; from the buildings within the palace, to the Daoist and Buddhist temples outside, everywhere you made sacrifices and ritual offerings, continuing with them for over a month. [But] today several prefectures of the northern circuits, continue to report earthquakes to the emperor, and immediately an envoy and carriage was ordered, to right away worship the three Buddhist jewels; moreover this is close to a mountain pass, with prostrations offered in proximity to a foreign land, how can there be no treacherous individual that would go and report the fact that you are praying for protection against calamities? Although Your Majesty's sincerity in respecting and obeying heaven can be called perfect, that is still not quite the case for [the actual] way [you try to] dispel disasters. As to relaxing the criminal code by pardoning the obstinate and perverse of the people, as well as depleting the national wealth to offer it to a bunch of people who fool around and do nothing productive, its desire is to solicit grand kindness (from heaven), to move the godly will, but it still is retroactively done to ask for something of the past, [much like] stopping to boil the soup when it already has boiled over, it is an exercise without any benefit, nothing more than believing in the bright and shiny.³³⁸

Han Qi goes on to suggest a concrete meaning for the portents, as well as practical ways how to counter the danger that they foretold. He demands of the emperor more action and less empty form (*wen!*) to respond to the crisis perceived to be at hand, in other words, he calls for utmost sincerity in his actions, down to using the very word. All of the different aspects he touches on in this memorial boil down to one problem: that the proper connection between normative, as well as practical demands of government and what was actually said and done in response to the phenomena had been lost, and that it was necessary to put an end to representative, ostentatious displays of imperial virtue and impartiality in favor of being partial towards what was the right thing to do in this situation, and towards the right, 'good' people. This clearly constitutes a sincere approach to the problem, although it is interesting to see that Han Qi actually attests the emperor that he is sincere, the problem is that he cannot translate that right attitude into the right action. Taken by itself this might suggest that Han Qi indeed was arguing against ritual per se

³³⁸ CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2841-2843. Note how in 1042 the emperor would apparently take the central thesis of this memorial as an examination question, and get a response from Ouyang Xiu (not within the official examination). Skonicki, "Employing the right kind of men." p. 76. One wonders if this was supposed to be a public recognition of the 'good men's' earlier argument.

when he warned against the empty (ritual) forms that the emperor practiced. And yet, our findings earlier about the independent role of proper ritual in the ‘good men’s’ vision of sincerity are corroborated by the fact that a considerable part of this, as well as a subsequent memorial deals with making the emperor’s *ritual* response to the crisis more fitting and more sincere; especially the latter one offers concrete suggestions for such ritual that could be read as displaying the emperor’s frugality and virtue in an equally ostentatious way; it also once more makes a case for moving a ritual to a different location in order to satisfy conflicting legitimate demands; in this way, all facets of ritual seen earlier are present in these two texts.³³⁹ Note similar calls for more sincerity and frugality, e.g. by Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 (1008–1048), who, much like Han, condemned that the court did not respond to heaven with sincerity, and did not safeguard the people with real deeds, instead issuing *kongwen*, empty words.³⁴⁰ Time and again it was also criticized that the emperor did not act on his own intention, and instead let the great ministers make his decisions for him, thereby relinquishing the handles of government, that is, the power to reward and punish, as well as to approve and deny requests; he opened the door for treacherous ministers to monopolize power, and destroyed the credibility of his orders by changing them frequently.³⁴¹

³³⁹ CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2842-2843. Han Qi argues here that there should be no more Buddhist or Daoist ceremonies in the great Hall of State, because these would take away from the ritual status that this hall had in important state rituals; however, in the course of the argument he acknowledges that something he calls “long-standing ritual” *changli* 長禮 warrants the emperor to keep sponsoring these ceremonies, they just cannot be held in the Hall of State, which should be reserved to more important rituals that are ‘staatstragend’.

³⁴⁰ (1/1038) CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2851-2854, particularly 2852.

³⁴¹ Song Qi (1038) CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2854-2856. Again, see Ouyang Xiu with a similar thrust, talking about “three evils” and “five matters” in 1042; this memorial was discussed in a footnote above: CB. vol. 6, j. 136, p. 3251-3259. Yin Zhu (1042): CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3296-3298.

Starting with the more-or-less veiled criticism by contemporary officials, not just the ‘good men’,³⁴² then and later the sovereign’s unwillingness to make and stick to decisions has been noted, and is readily apparent in the way he conducted politics over the course of his long reign. Renzong’s political style appears such that he could be easily swayed by courtiers and the political strife around him, reacting to crises and developments as they came up, always ready to countermand his earlier decision when the situation had changed in some way, and with a preference for public performances of the kind that we have seen above, while generally staying aloof and not committing himself to anything. In combination with the narrative of the villains and ‘good people’ at his court, the picture of a weak ruler emerges, without initiative or agency, prone to fall for the evil machinations of the likes of Lü Yijian. It was in the interest of the ‘good men’ to keep it that way, since at the time they were dependent on Renzong’s continued good will, and it was more flattering later to attribute their failure in *qingli* to evil forces at court, rather than their inability to convince the emperor of their position. However, it is rather curious that it was not just Fan Zhongyan who was being demoted four times under Renzong, but that even his enemy Lü Yijian had to resign from his posts on three occasions during his personal reign, however short that demotion lasted in 1033;³⁴³ the point to make here is not only that the emperor displayed no lasting allegiance to people or programs, but that he might have had much more agency in the political and personnel decisions at his court than the record allows for, which, on the other hand, is not to say that officials such as Lü Yijian did not still occupy a very

³⁴² While Li Shu in 1034 frames it in terms of bad officials playing the system with secret requests for promotion, in his ten-item memorial he still indirectly corroborates the findings of Han when he admonishes the emperor to make sure that government edicts [concerning promotions] had to be heeded and could not be changed by the requests of courtiers. CB. vol. 5, j. 114, p. 2663.

³⁴³ Fan Zhongyan: 1033, 1036, 1041, 1044/5; Lü Yijian: 1033, 1037, 1043. The latter one was a special case, discussed below.

influential position within a political culture strongly influenced by the reluctance to act of Renzong and his predecessors as well. However, as I see it, caution is advised when equating an ostensibly weak emperor with strong, overbearing chancellors.³⁴⁴ Therefore, in the absence of concrete evidence about his motives, rather than actually being erratic and without agency, appearing as such might just as well have been a coherent strategy to keep aloof from the lower reaches of court politics and political mistakes, and keep his officials on their toes. In this way he could maintain the emperor's elevated status and his own detached power, a strategy he may have picked up from Empress Dowager Liu, the only available role model for how to be a ruler in his adolescence. As a matter of fact, Fan's and Lü's experience could be compared to the fate of Yan Shu, who under the regency also had experienced ups and downs in his career.

From this angle, the emperor's habit of being noncommittal and performative becomes *wuwei* 無爲, a term that commonly is translated as 'non-action' and has had a long tradition in Chinese political discourse, but does not necessarily imply that there is no agency involved. It has been pointed out that the *qingli* reformers early on had publicly argued for the opposite, *youwei*, or activism, in their calls for re-forming state and society,³⁴⁵ but when looking at those calls against the backdrop of the political style of Renzong (and his predecessor as regent, Dowager Liu), as well as what the 'good men' perceived as a political-moral indifference among literati in general, then the activism they argued for appears to be of a different kind than the one we would see

³⁴⁴ Skonicki's narrative about the early years of Renzong's personal rule describes Lü's overbearing role in politics, combined with Renzong's weakness, following the respective *Changbian* records that blame Lü for his backroom machinations. "Employing the right kind of men." p. 60-66.

³⁴⁵ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*, p. 169-170. This draws on the proposals that Fan submitted in 1036 during the dispute with Lü, which talk about the need of the emperor to be biased and employ the right men, and only then could one hope for non-action; see note above (QSW. vol. 18, j. 386, p. 409-414).

later with Wang Anshi, in that it was much less specific and universal in its answers to the crisis; instead the ‘good men’ called on the responsible *individual* in government, predominantly the emperor, but also the literati, to time and again do the right thing in the decisions that they faced, and be determined enough to stick to them; in this way it becomes a situational and much more limited demand about *how* to act, rather than an absolute one about *what* to do, which worked from a specific program. As Ouyang Xiu put it in a memorial, dated to 1043: “one who governs (*zhi* 治) all under heaven, like a farmer tilling (*zhi*) the field, cannot [act in a] blanket [way].”³⁴⁶

By the same token, I would argue against Skonicki’s initial claim that the activism the reformers called for was in complete contrast to Han Dynasty correlative cosmologies such as the one proposed by Dong Zhongshu, because from my perspective, Fan Zhongyan and his allies very much argued in favor of the ruler as the cornerstone of governmental order; although their ideal ruler may appear more interventionist than the Han model, and the actual connection to cosmology remains less well explained outside of polemic statements, theirs is still a normative demand that starts with the ruler and his ‘goodness’ in terms of decision-making, and then very concretely spreads this ‘goodness’ through the ranks.³⁴⁷ However, as we will see below, part of this effect is brought about by the emperor’s recognition of the ‘good people’, and as such is also a much more indirect, immaterial mechanism than the word ‘activism’ and the comparison to Wang Anshi suggests.

³⁴⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3464-3467.

³⁴⁷ Skonicki, “Employing the right kind of men.” p. 42-43.

Interlude – the ‘good men’ and Lü Yijian united?

In 1038 the ruler of the Tangut state of Xi Xia, Yuanhao, declared himself emperor of his realm, and in 1/1039 sent envoys to the Sung court to deliver the challenge.³⁴⁸ The subsequent attacks by the Xi Xia, accompanied by almost constant negotiations through an exchange of envoys and messages, brought on an episode for the ‘good men’ that is rather difficult to interpret, a difficulty that extends to the protagonists and their successors themselves, as we have seen when we talked about the dispute between Fan Chunren, the son of Zhongyan, Fu Bi, and Ouyang Xiu, not just about whether the episode of cooperation with Lü Yijian should be included in the eulogies, but also about how far the reconciliation actually went. Information on this period is scanty and ambiguous, and the subsequent difficulties with its interpretation are visible in the sources themselves – on the one hand we learn but the bare details of this cooperation, while on the other hand the same passages emphasize the treachery and deviousness of Lü Yijian’s secret plans, and the long-standing enmity between him and the good men. The precarious situation that the Song state found itself in at this point was exacerbated by the fact that after Lü Yijian’s resignation in 4/1037,³⁴⁹ he allegedly had purposefully recommended a group of elderly statesmen for the post that were too old and sickly to be effective at much, earning the chancellery the epithet of ‘infirmary’, a verdict that the *Changbian* appears to take wholesale from an accusatory memorial on Lü by Sun Mian, dated 1043.³⁵⁰ Whoever recommended them,

³⁴⁸ Ruth W. Dunnell, *Tanguts and the Tangut State of Ta Xia*. Princeton University, 1983 (Dissertation). p. 124-125. CB. vol. 5, j. 123, p. 2893-94.

³⁴⁹ CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2826.

³⁵⁰ For the allegations regarding Lü’s intrigue: CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2864. Sun Mian’s memorial: CB. vol. 6, j. 139, p. 3346. Note that the decision could have been the emperor’s himself, who might have wanted more docile, controllable ministers than Lü Yijian and Fan Zhongyan were.

the problem was so bad that by 3/1038 Han Qi felt it necessary to recommend Lü among others in a list of able candidates to replace the current, incompetent heads of government, at least as second choice and as an alternative should the emperor not be willing to promote those whom the public supposedly considered to be the best – that is, his associate Fan Zhongyan and company.³⁵¹ What seems fairly certain is that in the face of the danger the state was in, the two sides, Lü Yijian and Fan Zhongyan, in 5/1040 made a temporary peace with each other, with Lü Yijian publicly recommending Fan Zhongyan to the emperor for promotion in nominal rank and a command at the border, and Fan Zhongyan in an equally public setting denying to have a personal grudge against Lü, claiming that he had merely talked about matters of state before.³⁵² It must be pointed out that this reconciliation did not involve a change of heart on the part of Lü Yijian about how to assess men that liked to talk about things,³⁵³ and at this point it also did not amount to Fan's return to a capacity at court, and yet, it is hardly conceivable that this demonstration of unity could take place without direct ramifications for court politics, given the number of public supporters that Fan Zhongyan had accrued. At first, however, Fan Zhongyan and Han Qi themselves were in need of help in 4/1041; the latter had lost a battle, while the former had overstepped his authority by independently sending letters of negotiation to the Xi Xia, and burning a response that he deemed insulting; this resulted in a situation where the

³⁵¹ Han Qi's recommendation of Lü et al.: CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2866. In this instance, the emperor appears to have had more agency in the decision-making process.

³⁵² First signs of Lü's return: CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3010. Record of their public reconciliation: CB. vol. 5, j. 127, 3013-3014. Already earlier (3/1040), Zhongyan is 'reinstated' and promoted on suggestion of Han Qi (CB. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2988). Not having arrived in his new local post, Fan is again promoted (4/1040), with Gao Ruona as his subordinate (CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3009). Already here there is the comment that Gao and Fan had been enemies before, and now were supposed to work together.

³⁵³ This is suggested by an anecdote: somebody is recommended by Du Yan, and speaks intelligently about the issues at the border, but Lü Yijian asserts his position that argumentative and rhetoric talent does not equal practical abilities. CB. vol. 6, j. 135, p. 3215.

villains Xia Song 夏竦 (985–1051) and Lü Yijian ended up openly *defending* Han Qi and Fan Zhongyan, respectively, against harsher punishment, although it is unlikely that they actually would have been executed given the general reluctance in this dynasty to punish its officials in this way.³⁵⁴ By recounting elsewhere how Lü Yijian had actually sold out someone else on this occasion, who had argued for the death penalty for Fan during this incident, the sources still insist that Lü Yijian is the villain of the story, but the fact remains that the political enmities of the thirties appear to have lost their edge, to say the least.³⁵⁵ The most interesting instance of potential cooperation between Lü Yijian and the ‘good men’, however, is difficult to assess because of its timing in the records: in 7/1042, Lü Yijian is given the post of supervisor of the military commission, concurrent to his chancellery appointments; the explanation made specific reference to a suggestion made earlier by Fu Bi to concurrently appoint chancellors to the military commission, which at this point in 1042 was seconded by Zhang Fangping 張方平 (1007–1091), whose own contradictory relationship to the ‘good men’ will be discussed below.³⁵⁶ Yet, the *Changbian* records Fu’s request for 2/1040,³⁵⁷ more than two years before it

³⁵⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 131, p. 3113, 3114. For a discussion of the origin myth of what was supposed to be a provision of the founder not to execute officials, see Charles Hartman, “Cao Xun 曹勳 (1098–1174) and the Legend of Emperor Taizu’s Oath.” *Conference on Middle Period China, 800–1400*, Harvard University, 2014. Date accessed: Aug. 13, 2014. For a general monograph on ‘Ancestor’s Instructions’, and a discussion of the development of the ‘stipulation’ to be ‘ren 仁’, of which this was a part, see Deng Xiaonan 鄧小南, *Zuzong zhi fa: Bei Song qianqi zhengzhi shulüe* 祖宗之法: 北宋前期政治述略 [Invoking Imperial Ancestor’s Instructions in Early Northern Song Politics]. Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sansheng shudian, 2006. p. 524–528. The point made is that these instructions, including this one, were a development of the historical and political circumstances in early Northern Song and not actual regulations of the founders, but did have a real impact on political culture.

³⁵⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3127–28.

³⁵⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3283. Lü Yijian feeling uneasy about the accumulation of power in the face of omens, and resigning from *pan*-position (9/1042): CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3290. Before that (7/1042), Zhang Fangping had recommended that the Military commission is given up, or its duties transferred to the chancellery (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3281).

³⁵⁷ CB. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2975.

was implemented and three months before the reconciliation and the return of Lü Yijian to official power, on occasion of a decree ordering the civil councilors of state (which, again, did not include Lü at the time) to take part in the discussion of border affairs with the military commission. This came in at a time when several memorials were handed in and regulations were promulgated that were supposed to help the dynasty to respond in a more unified fashion to the crisis and the Xi Xia menace, by reuniting the institutions that were discussing and deciding on policies.³⁵⁸ However, it remains odd that Fu Bi would seek to increase the powers and influence of the chancellery at a time when he would also attack them for being lazy and indecisive, in all but so many words.³⁵⁹ We know that one of the ‘good men’, Han Qi, at that point had already stated publicly that he considered another stint of Lü Yijian as the least bad of the bad options available in view of the incompetence of the other leaders; moreover, a preparation time of three months from the memorial in 2/1040 to the reconciliation in 5/1040 would not be out of the question; in other words, even if correct, the date given for Fu Bi’s memorial does not necessarily mean that it was not part of the deal. Whatever the exact background and date of the original request, Fu Bi’s suggestion still is referred to by the *Changbian* as leading to an unprecedented increase in power for Lü Yijian in 1042. The measure at the same time also applied to another civil grand councilor, and to the military commissioner, Yan Shu, Fu Bi’s father in law, who would also concurrently be appointed to the chancellery; however, Lü Yijian would profit the most from it, for the provision promoted him to the elevated, if temporary, position of supervisor (判 *pan*); this would give him direct control and jurisdiction

³⁵⁸ CB. vol. 5, j. 124, p. 2933 (1039); abbreviated: j. 126, p. 2992 (3/1040). At the same time, the vice chancellors are ordered to discuss military affairs with the military commission (Yan Shu’s suggestion), and a hall is ordered to be built for that purpose (CB. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2992).

³⁵⁹ (3/1040) CB. vol. 5, j. 126, p. 2993.

over both the civil and the military branch of the administration, and thus an unprecedented position in a dynasty that originally had set these two up as institutionally separate branches, precisely to prevent such all-encompassing powers. Only two months later, in 9/1042, Lü Yijian's deferral of the *pan*-title is recorded, citing public criticism of its elevated nature, and his own unease as the reasons, however, he remained concurrent military commissioner, and thus still was in a position to dominate both branches of government. Note that at no point any of the core 'good men' seems to have uttered a single word of protest at the elevation of what supposedly was their arch enemy.³⁶⁰ All this might help to shed light on the somewhat cryptic story of how the 'good men' did fall out with Lü Yijian again, although, as mentioned before, the sources try to dispel the notion that specifically Fu Bi ever had been part of that accord. The *Changbian* has this take place in 7/1042, just after Lü's elevation and before his deferral: the northern dynasty of the Liao had used the opportunity of the Xi Xia crisis to send envoys and make more demands on the Song, including territorial gains at the border. The Song, acting on a suggestion by Lü Yijian,³⁶¹ had sent Fu Bi to negotiate, and the envoy had been able to dissuade the Liao ruler from territorial demands, and to get him to agree to certain terms. When Fu came back to report to Renzong's court, he was ordered to himself draft the necessary letters of state; however, when Fu received the final versions on the way back, he became suspicious and secretly opened the seals, only to discover that three clauses of the official letters did not reflect what had been discussed with the Liao. After some back and forth, Fu Bi went back to the palace, gained access, and openly accused Lü Yijian of having had the letters changed to arouse the

³⁶⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3290. The exception was Tian Kuang, recorded at the time of Lü's resignation.

³⁶¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 135, p. 3230.

suspicion of the Liao with the envoy Fu Bi, and thereby have him killed.³⁶² It is this episode during which Yan Shu takes Lü's side against his son-in-law by pointing out that it was probably just a mistake, and that the latter's accusations were improbable. Following the well-worn pattern, Fu Bi then started to accuse Yan Shu and Lü Yijian of having formed a faction to deceive the emperor, an accusation that given what we have seen actually might have been true, although Fu Bi in all probability would have been part of such an accord originally. This interpretation would mean that, once more, Yan Shu was unwilling to follow one of the 'good men' in his crusade, and give up an opportunity for his own advancement in the process. The *Changbian* of course is quite adamant about who the villain is in that story, and takes Fu Bi's claim for a fact,³⁶³ however, it would be mere speculation to say much about who, if anyone, was behind the changed letters; suffice it to say that aside from the parties involved any number of personal interests at court could have come to resent the accumulation of status, power, and influence that the alleged cooperation between the former enemies brought with it, including, of course, the emperor himself. This version would also explain why Lü Yijian soon afterwards felt uneasy in his influential position, and was relieved from it.³⁶⁴ Despite the uncertainty regarding the exact details, motives, and more importantly, who was in on it, it seems quite clear that there was *some* cooperation between the 'good men' and the 'villains' Lü Yijian and Xia Song, and in view of the military crisis and the perceived incompetence of the current leadership, there were

³⁶² CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3283-3287; for the incident with Yan Shu: p. 3287. There is a separate record of Yan Shu going against Fu Bi in a similar question about the wording of the letters (p. 3293). Note the similar version in *Shaoshi wenjian lu*, that also records the involvement of Wang Gongchen in Lü Yijian's 'faction'. *Wenjian lu*. j. 9, p. 90-91.

³⁶³ CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3295-96.

³⁶⁴ The intention of the *Changbian* to always ascribe ulterior motives to Lü Yijian also becomes obvious in the footnotes (CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3358-59), which notes that a source claiming that Lü Yijian had recommended Fu Bi on occasion of his resignation in 3/1043 cannot be true, and has been omitted from the main text.

‘good’, that is, ethically plausible reasons for such cooperation. If it was acceptable to defend an empress dowager when the situation allowed and demanded it, why would cooperating with a former enemy be out of the question? However, Fu Bi’s lack of trust in this relationship is equally apparent. In all of this it is curious that, despite again falling out with Lü Yijian in a quite public manner, Fu Bi and the others were not demoted this time, instead there were overt signs that Lü Yijian would soon resign for good due to his old age and illness. At the same time, harsh attacks by ‘good men’ such as Sun Mian and Cai Xiang on Lü Yijian reinforced that whatever cooperation there had been (if indeed the latter two had ever been part of the deal itself, or had had knowledge of it) had come to an end by early 1043 at the latest.³⁶⁵

Chapter 4. Being sidelined or promoted? The political situation at the outset of the *qingli* reform

The history of the *qingli* reform period has received ample treatment by others before,³⁶⁶ in the interest of space it therefore seems best to approach it by way of the most important questions that will allow us to compare and contrast these reform measures, the nature and cohesiveness of the group that proposed them, as well as their underlying motives, with the *puyi* debate and

³⁶⁵ Sun Mian (1/1043): CB. vol. 6, j. 139, p. 3345-3347. Cai Xiang and Lü Yijian’s very last resignation (4/1043): CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3367-3369.

³⁶⁶ James T.C. Liu, “An Early Sung Reformer: Fan Chung-yen,” in: *Chinese Thoughts and Institutions*. p. 105-131; Ou-yang Hsiu. p. 40-51; McGrath. “The Reigns of Jen-tsung (1022–1063) and Ying-tsung (1063–1067),” in: *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 5, Part One*. p. 279-346. p. 316-323. Bol. *This Culture of Ours*. p. 170-175. Smith, “Anatomies of Reform: The Qingli Reforms of Fan Zhongyan (ca. 1043–44) and the New Policies of Wang Anshi (1069–1085) Compared.” In German: Peter Buriks, “Fan Chung-yen’s Versuch einer Reform des chinesischen Beamtenstaates in den Jahren 1043/44 [Fan Zhongyan’s attempt at reforming the Chinese administrative state in the years 1043–44].” *Oriens Extremus* 3 (1956). p. 57-80, 153-184.

ultimately in a later step with the *xining* reforms: why would it take the ‘good men’ several months after the first signs of their rise to announce their comprehensive program? Why would the emperor first elevate and promote Fan, Han, Ouyang, and the others, all the while assuring them of his appreciation, and then withdraw his support before the reforms could have taken effect, for accusations that had been heard before? What was the main thrust of their reforms, what was their own stake in them? Were there disagreements among the ‘good men’ about the reforms, and how did they deal with these? Is it possible to imagine a good reason behind Fan Zhongyan’s apparent blunder of all but admitting that he had formed a faction at court? How would Ouyang Xiu’s view of ‘good men’ change in the wake of the failed argument for the existence of ‘factions of good men’? To attempt answers to these questions, the announcement of the *qingli* program as a political act in 9/1043, with its underlying motives, and its consequences for the group that proposed it, will be in the focus for the remainder of this part; however, in this chapter a discussion of the developments in the run-up to this announcement will show how precarious and ambiguous their positions still were in the summer of 1043, despite the promotions they received.

Around the end of 1042, and the beginning of 1043, the sources paint a contradictory picture of the intentions of Renzong, an ambiguity which, as we have seen, was quite typical of his style of rule. There were indeed overt signs on several occasions, starting with the military successes which Fan Zhongyan had in 10/1042, however limited these were, that the emperor had shifted his confidence to Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi, and Fu Bi,³⁶⁷ signs that together with Lü Yijian’s

³⁶⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 138, p. 3312-13. The emperor expresses his confidence and tries to promote Han Qi, Fan Zhongyan, and Pang Ji, Fan firmly declines (Han only after first accepting). Already before that, Fu Bi had been promoted, and

public slips in protocol, declining health, and his subsequent resignation from the chancellery³⁶⁸ allowed scholars to conclude that the emperor this time was beginning to throw his full support behind the ‘good men’ and their project.³⁶⁹ Shortly afterwards in 3/1043, the younger men in the group, Wang Su 王素 (1007–1073), Ouyang Xiu, and Yu Jing, received remonstrance positions, for which the latter had apparently qualified themselves by their public acts of disobedience in 1036, after the ousting of Fan Zhongyan; the record of this promotion was accompanied by the comment in *Changbian* that after the end of the Lü Yijian era and in view of the current crises and uprisings, the emperor wanted to reform the evils of the realm, and therefore increased the censorial staff.³⁷⁰ Shortly afterwards, the emperor sent a eunuch envoy to inform Han Qi and Fan Zhongyan that they would be transferred to important court positions in the chancellery and military commission as soon as the situation at the border had been stabilized.³⁷¹ On the other hand, the same message also contained the assurance that this decision was the emperor’s own, not the recommendation of his ministers, an assurance that becomes quite telling when looking at his other actions, and more so at what he did not do: while good men indeed came into censorial

tried to decline as well (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3295; j. 138, p. 3309). In 2/1043 Han, Fan and Pang receive monetary rewards (CB. vol. 6, j. 139, p. 3348).

³⁶⁸ First signs appeared in 12/1042 that Lü Yijian’s health was failing, and that he would resign soon (CB. vol. 6, j. 138, p. 3329). Note that he asked numerous times to resign, also after attacks on him by Sun Mian (1/1043. CB. vol. 6, j. 139, p. 3345): ‘final’ resignation from chancellery, but he still has a part in debates of important matters (3/1043): CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3358-59.

³⁶⁹ However, said ambiguity is still reflected in the writings of these scholars, where oftentimes the emperor is depicted as volatile and without much agency: Liu observed that the reformers did not have the highest positions at court when promoted, but that for all practical intents and purposes Fan became the leading minister in 8/1043 (Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 41-43); Buriks points to the military successes, as well as the general sense of crisis, which swayed the volatile emperor in favor of reforms: Buriks. “Fan Chung-yen’s Versuch einer Reform.” p. 58. For McGrath, Renzong had no choice but to turn to the reformers after it became apparent that Lü Yijian would be too ill to be effective. McGrath, “The Reigns of Jen-tsung and Ying-tsung.” p. 317.

³⁷⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3359-3360.

³⁷¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3361.

positions, the officials promoted to or kept in the more influential posts were not actually reformers, or, in the case of Yan Shu, at least not dyed-in-the-wool ones; it was only a month later, in 4/1043, that through a concerted effort Yu Jing, Wang Gongzhen, and others had Xia Song ousted as designated military commissioner, so that the reform-friendly elder statesman Du Yan could get the position instead.³⁷² Given the support he had rendered in the period outlined in the ‘interlude’, the grudge that Xia Song had about this incident, as well as about the poem by Shi Jie that painted him as the villain appears not unjustified.³⁷³

Even worse from the ‘good men’s’ perspective was the fact that the outgoing senior chancellor Lü Yijian not only received tokens of gratitude and commiseration for his ailing health from the emperor (the emperor sent Lü clippings from his moustache as cure for his condition), on one of his resignations Lü Yijian in 3/1043 was also promoted to a high, if nominal title, and given the distinction of becoming declared a “Consultant of the chancellery and military commission in important matters of the army and the state,” a phrase that had some resemblance to the one that described the powers of regents;³⁷⁴ if we want to give credence to the accusations of Cai Xiang of 4/1043, recently promoted to censorial office for his congratulatory poem, for all intents and purposes Lü Yijian was still participating in the decisions at court, only now the leading officials came to his house to discuss the important matters. The memorial listed all the evil consequences

³⁷² CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3364-65.

³⁷³ On occasion of the downfall of the good men, the *Changbian* comes back to Xia Song’s grudge; his intrigue supposedly contributed to their fall from power (CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3636).

³⁷⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3359. For example see the phrasing of the failed attempt of Dowager Liu to install Lady Yang as quasi-regent in her stead. CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2609. Dowager Liu was declared to be “in charge of administering the matters of the state and the army” 權處分軍國事 (SS. vol. 1, j. 9, p. 175). Later regents had different titles.

that Lü's tenure had had in past and present, and how the fact that government officials now took orders from his mansion made these officials the laughing stock of people on the streets.³⁷⁵

Allegedly this caused Lü Yijian to ask to resign from these tasks, however, the fact that in 9/1043 Ouyang Xiu once again felt the need to attack Lü Yijian and his alleged, secret meddling in court politics shows that the 'good men' as late as that were not convinced that Lü Yijian really had relinquished all his hidden, extraordinary influence.³⁷⁶ It proved hard to actually push back on influence and power that to a large part appeared not to be of an institutionalized, and, as it were, public nature, at least until that influence ended naturally, with Yijian's death in 1044, when the 'good men' already were on their way out. In short, once again Renzong attempted to have his cake and eat it too, by promoting the 'good men' and still favoring Lü Yijian, and the most that could be said was that there were slight advantages for Fan Zhongyan and his associates, and that they were dominating the public arena.

Accordingly, Fan, Han and Fu at first appeared everything but thrilled by their imminent elevation, and tried to decline their promotions from the start, referring to the fact that it was not a given that Yuan Hao's peace proposal was genuine and that the border was secure.³⁷⁷ Indeed, despite the public displays and private assurances of the emperor, they had every reason to doubt Renzong's intentions, or to question if indeed it solely was the intention of the emperor to

³⁷⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3367-3368. Recommendation and promotion of Cai Xiang because of a poem (p. 3365).

³⁷⁶ See the three memorials against Lü receiving additional honors, against him ignoring laws, and against him (or whoever led his ailing hand these days) secretly meddling in politics. While not discussed by Li Tao, it is possible that the dating is not conclusive. These followed another resignation by Lü (CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444-3446). There is an earlier, separate request by Lü to be relieved from a post (CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3372).

³⁷⁷ First, when advised that they would be promoted (CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3361); later when they were promoted (p. 3363). Fu Bi cites his failure as envoy to decline a Hanlin promotion (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3309); more refusals: CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3359; 3360-61.

promote them, given that important decisions were still made in the secrecy of the inner palace, as they had criticized before: together with the new demands of the Liao Empire to the North, the most pressing issue of the day was the Xi Xia campaign and the related debate on their peace overtures, which started in 12/1042; it was specifically the all-important question about the ritual position that the Xi Xia should take in their correspondence and peace accord with the Song that agitated the ‘good men’.³⁷⁸ Fan Zhongyan had already shown earlier in his capacity as local military commander at the border that he had his own opinion about how negotiations with the Xi Xia should be conducted, by burning parts of a message that he deemed insulting before the envoy’s eyes;³⁷⁹ likewise Fu Bi in his function as envoy to the Liao had taken it as his personal duty to ensure favorable terms and wording of the ensuing new agreement, going against the court and his father in law, Yan Shu, who did not share his misgivings about using certain phrases.³⁸⁰ Subsequently, the ‘good men’ repeatedly made public statements about their point of view on the question of peace.³⁸¹ However, after their promotions to ranks within the military commission at court they would be removed from the positions in the local military or as envoy that had in the past afforded them the opportunity to act on their own and give the Song a military advantage, or to directly influence the negotiations.³⁸² So whoever had decided that

³⁷⁸ For an account of the proposals and back and forth, as well as a memorial by Pang Ji on the question: CB. vol. 6, j. 138, p. 3330-33; j. 139, p. 3343-44

³⁷⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 131, p. 3114.

³⁸⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3291-3293.

³⁸¹ Han Qi, Fan Zhongyan, in a memorial: CB. vol. 6, j. 139, p. 3348-3354; Yu Jing: p. 3354-5 (both 2/1043); Fu Bi (4/1043): CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3361.

³⁸² Fu Bi for the case of Fan Zhongyan and Han Qi discusses a “divergent suggestion” that tried to make an argument against vice commissioners being sent on missions outside the capital, on grounds of not wanting to give military officers a precedent for accumulating too much status outside of the capital. He argues against that, claiming that evil intentions cumulated in this suggestion (CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3363-4).

peace with the Xi Xia was preferable – and in fact Yan Shu would claim that the ‘general opinion’ at court was united in this against Han Qi³⁸³ – had a vested interest to deny the reformers this influence, to prevent them from interfering with the process. However, the only hint that Lü Yijian was part of this is the aforementioned note earlier that had him recommend Fu Bi on his resignation, a recommendation that under these circumstances would make more sense.³⁸⁴ And yet, given our lack of knowledge about what was discussed in these circles, it might as well have been the emperor himself who saw the peace with the enemies as the centerpiece to achieving *taiping*.

The dilemma that the ‘good men’ were in shows in their memorials and proclamations at the time: on the one hand there was no reason to believe that Renzong or his court in fact had been convinced by their argument, and fundamentally changed their minds, given that the new positions were not all that influential and not granting them the access to the inner circles that they wanted, especially regarding the negotiations; on the other hand even nominal court positions, and especially the remonstrance positions held by the younger ‘good men’, afforded them the opportunity to do what they could do best: to publicly argue their case, in front of the emperor and high officials at court, and by way of memorials through the official channels, in order to gain a higher profile in the process. Thus it is unclear who was baiting whom in this game,³⁸⁵ but whatever may have been the case, it seems not just for reasons of ritual modesty, or to gain a name, that the three most important figures, Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi, and Fu Bi, declined

³⁸³ (7/1043) CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3408. This indicates that Yan Shu, too, at times made unproven claims about general support for his position.

³⁸⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3359 (annotation).

³⁸⁵ This is rephrasing a point made by Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 171-172.

their promotions forcefully, pointing to the important tasks that still needed to be done in their respective positions; Fu Bi supposedly even had to be put publicly on the spot by the emperor, during a court gathering to see off foreign envoys as late as 8/1043, to finally accept his promotion to vice commissioner of military affairs, although that was also linked to his lingering anger about the terms of the Qidan treaty.³⁸⁶ They as well tried to have their cake and eat it too: both Fu Bi and Cai Xiang, one shortly after the other, argued that if the emperor insisted on calling Fan Zhongyan and Han Qi to court, responding to popular sentiments, and wanting to get impartial advice, then maybe one of them should be left at the border to ensure its safety, while the other could implement the reforms that would lead to victory;³⁸⁷ note that Cai quite blatantly claimed Han and Fan were ‘of one heart’ – *tong xin* 同心 – in their loyalty and courage, adding another piece of evidence to the contention that the ‘good men’ never really denied that they were a faction of sorts.

Two memorials by Ouyang Xiu dated 5/1043 are revealing in many ways: firstly they argue for and present in detail a proposal that in modified form would be part of the full program handed in four months later, and secondly it once more illustrates the fears that the ‘good men’ had regarding their suggestions and the intentions of calling them to court:

Previously, the censor Ouyang had received his commission, and first had made [the following] suggestion: the officials in the realm are very numerous, and the court has no means to comprehensively know [who] among them is wise or stupid, good or evil; offices [like the] bureau of personnel evaluation, the bureau of lesser military assignments, the ministry of personnel, and others only record the duration that one holds an office, whether the people are talented or not, all cannot be known. [When it comes to] the financial commissioners and other ranks in

³⁸⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3417.

³⁸⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 140, p. 3363-64; p. 3369-3370. It would seem that Han Qi indeed went back to the border for some time.

the various circuits, except for those corrupt officials who defeat themselves by engaging in it when in plain sight, other than that there is no method to oversee officials. This results in one assigning the old and sickly, or the weak and talentless, or the corrupt who bring harm to the matters, [so that] this kind of person spreads in the prefectures and counties, and there is no such thing as demotions or promotions [based on merit]. Due to the fact that one preserved this bad situation for a long time, officials who are unfit for their assignment are many, causing eight or nine out of ten prefectures and counties in the realm not to be [well] governed.

Nowadays there are unceasing battles, taxes and corvée duties altogether are troublesome, the people wail, there is no recovery from their distress, so as to rescue them from their hardship, nothing is more urgent than choosing officials. I today want to ask to specifically establish a Regulation of Inspection, [stipulating that] from among the court-level officials in the capital and in the provinces, from the ‘three aides’ up to the director level of officials, capable and experienced, incorruptible and intelligent ones are to be chosen to act as inspectors for the various circuits. I ask that there be an order [to the local administrations] to make reports to the center on [the roster of] officials, each recording the names of the officials of one prefecture, creating a ledger with empty lines to give to them (the inspectors), sending them to every prefecture and county to comprehensively review the officials, so that for those among them who are impartial and diligent, the objective manifestation in which this becomes apparent, as well as for the old, sick, and talentless, those apparent signs of being unable to govern [well], in each of these cases are written in red under the name. Those among them of average talent, and who otherwise have no outstanding efficiency, but who also have not come to commit an outright mistake, are written in black. If moreover there are people who, despite average talent, are especially good at one thing, these [skills] also are to be set apart in red. The commissioners return these records to the court, and then the court is able to see at a glance the wise, stupid, the good, and the evil [among] the officials, and not one of them falls through the cracks. Later one additionally suggests a method of promotion and demotion based on merit. Done in this way, it will be sufficient to clear up the realm, and within half a year, one can hope to achieve [good] government. It will only cost the court the work of carefully selecting twenty trusted people to fill the positions of inspector, other than that there is nothing that is hard to implement.³⁸⁸

Here we see Ouyang Xiu make a concrete, institutional suggestion for the problem that the court had too little control over local officials, an observation that as such appears to have been shared by officials with no obvious sympathies for the good men’s cause:

However, the court had a preference for sending envoys on an ad hoc basis (that is, a non- or less institutionalized, irregular remedy), and this had not been implemented right away. The vice chancellor Jia Changchao before had been vice censor-in-chief, and as such had once talked about the possibility of financial commissioners being suitable to be charged by the court with inspecting officials, having them name those who are not quite upright. Thus one [re-]considered selecting the suggestion by [Ouyang] Xiu, issuing the following edict: the financial commissioners and vice commissioners are being appointed as concurrent inspectors and vice inspectors, and are ordered to henceforth personally put the names of officials in the subordinate local units under their jurisdiction in a ledger, recording with their own hand their achievements and errors. If there was a clear achievement and an apparent sign of administrative incompetence it instantly would be reported to the outside (of the administrative unit), [and for] those with less obvious diligence, and those who only avoided mistakes, promptly at every year’s end, one would comprehensively record them and dispatch them to be reported. At the same time one also should, in a manner that is impartial and draws on the facts, additionally increase one’s position if someone is competent, and also apply strict demotions if somebody is busying himself merely with following the old [evil] routines. Although judicial commissioners do not carry the inspector title, they also should operate under these standards.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3374-75.

³⁸⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3375.

At first glance it might appear that this institutional arrangement of recording and reporting the merits and demerits of officials already would provide the controlling mechanism that Ouyang Xiu had called for, albeit by merging his suggestions with those of Jia Changchao 賈昌朝 (997?–1065), a high official who generally is thought to have been opposed to the ‘good men’.³⁹⁰ And yet, the following follow-up memorial informs us otherwise:

When the financial commissioners themselves are concurrently inspecting the officials of their administrative unit, today, compared to establishing special commissioner positions, it increases the level of institutionalized control, therefore vis-à-vis the long-standing system this is somewhat closer to how it should be, but if one wants to cure the evils of our time, then this is not completely adequate. Moreover, in my original suggestion of dispatching inspectors, in fact I intended for the court to carefully choose officials that are strong and intelligent, I humbly bring to your attention [the fact that] if who the court chooses are people that are not up to the task, then after all they are not to be assigned as [inspection] commissioners. The financial commissioners assigned to this task now, how can they in their entirety be the right people? Among them are some that are dimwitted, senile, and sickly, there are some who are corrupt and neglect their duty, people of this kind, themselves ought to be impeached, how can they impeach others? Even if among them there are people with talent and integrity, when transporting goods and taxes they moreover face a multitude of complexities and trifles, when providing the needs of the army they face extreme urgency, they don’t have any spare time to comprehensively visit the prefectures and counties or to exclusively devote themselves to inspecting as it is, therefore it is unavoidable that there will be delays and carelessness.

Therefore I say that when the financial commissioners are concurrently serving as inspectors, those without talent will not be able to fulfill their tasks in the first place, and moreover will not have the leisure to be completely devoted, we will merely see empty words *kong wen* 空文, I fear there will not be any real result. In institutional terms, nothing is better than exclusively dispatching commissioners. I humbly observe that there have been military campaigns for a number of years, and that the realm is distressed by abuses. Due to famine and disease, there already is no resource left so as to render help, with taxes and requisitioning, there is no other way but to economize; there merely is the intention of loving the people, and nowhere is there a method of translating that into real benefit [for them]. If one merely could successively get rid of superfluous officials, not assign the corrupt and brutal, choosing and employing good officials [instead], each would cause relief to the people, and only this one measure could affect the people in the most decisive way. If one can turn it into a benefit for the people, why would one dread the effort of choosing people? In fact, since recent years one continuously has dispatched pacification commissioners, why would this now suddenly be considered difficult?

Today if one fears that among the ‘three aides’ and the director level officials it would be hard to get the right kind of people, then I now ask that one for the time being should go with what has been done time and again for the pacification commissioners, and from among the group of officials close to the emperor, as well as from among the censorial and academic staff select and assign ten or more people; for this smaller institution one concurrently assigns [to each official] the inspection of two circuits [to one inspector], and for the personal retainers among them, also orders them to be themselves assigned supervisors, to separately conduct supervisions,³⁹¹ [otherwise] drawing on the stipulations of when I have first asked for this, to implement it. As to those financial commissioners who

³⁹⁰ Liu, *Ou-Yang Hsiu*. p. 42. Note, however, the epitaph for his brother by Fan Zhongyan (QSW. vol. 19, j. 389, p. 51-54).

³⁹¹ *Caifangshi* 採訪使 was an ad-hoc investigation/supervision commissioner. Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. p. 515.

[now] are concurrent inspectors, if one were able to carefully select the right people for that, I would also beg that it be inscribed as the regulation to be commonly implemented henceforth.

I humbly think that it is not the case that the officials close to the emperor are not talking about the issues, neither is it the case that the court is not taking measures, the great problem lies in the fact that it merely displays empty words, and is not requiring real results. Therefore although the changes are numerous, and although the orders are confusingly many, above and below one follows the old routine, and in the end there is no improvement at all. Today if one wants to every day anew seek [good] government, to change and remedy the evils of the times, then one must rely on energetic action, and only then can one be successful in this undertaking. What I have talked about, is an urgent matter for the people, and a benefit for the realm, I am not just sketchily talking about one or two things to fulfill the obligation of my office to speak up. I hope that YM will pay attention, and choose cautiously. There was no reply.³⁹²

Ouyang Xiu explains here that the way the court implemented his suggestion by indiscriminately assigning the task to the existing financial commissioners in his view had rendered it all but ineffective, at best overburdening talented officials whose tasks were already numerous and onerous, at worst giving the corrupt and incompetent among them the opportunity to handle the new task yet again in a corrupt and incompetent way. Once more we see the central tenet of his and the good men's views that the court needed to be more forceful and discriminate in its actions and appointments, in other words, he once more is arguing for activism, *youwei*, in the sense described above. Ouyang Xiu certainly appears willing to make changes to the institutional arrangements he had suggested originally, if they were providing the court with the institutional leverage to exercise the discriminatory power he wanted it to exercise; therefore he did not oppose to concurrently assign the financial commissioners as inspectors as such, provided that one could select the right kind of people for the job. However, were one to stop at indiscriminately promulgating his institutional suggestions without getting the right kind of people for these jobs, then the whole affair would turn into another case of empty words, *kongwen*, or a performative act, without real effect or benefit for the people. In short, the question of what form the institution should take is secondary, as long as the right people were

³⁹² CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3375-76.

chosen, and as long as it did the job it was supposed to accomplish. Note also that the current series of crises plays an important part in his argument for the need for real, actual change.

There was “no reply” to Ouyang’s memorial. This silence fits well with another memorial of somewhat uncertain date in which Ouyang Xiu deems it necessary to plead with the emperor to call Han Qi and Fan Zhongyan in for special audiences and get their advice about things, specifically about the situation at the border, and yet another one in which he laments the fact that, of the plans offered by those officials who talked about things, one had only half-heartedly implemented some minor stopgap measures, but not one that would really address the big issues that the dynasty faced.³⁹³ These instances serve to further illuminate the point that from the perspective of the ‘good men’, they did not have much access and influence at this point, either at court or with the emperor, and certainly not enough to actually achieve what they wanted to achieve. Nevertheless there appeared a string of memorials by the ‘good men’ on how to react to the crisis at the border and the uprisings,³⁹⁴ more proposals on getting better local officials and making their recommenders accountable for their mistakes,³⁹⁵ some attacks on opponents, at one

³⁹³ CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3381-2, 3383-84.

³⁹⁴ Fan Zhongyan: CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3377-3378; Yu Jing: CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3379-3380. Fan and Han twice on border and its finances: CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3384-6. Yu Jing on the role of rewards and punishments in dealing with robbers: CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3389-3390; Fan on how to motivate and treat soldiers: CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3390-91. This is just a selection.

³⁹⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3386. The suggestion is not the same, but the argument made by Han and Fan in this memorial is rather similar to Ouyang Xiu’s. Note that they also claim that “[what causes the problem] are not the particulars of the laws and regulations of the dynasty, [instead] it must be the difference in wisdom and stupidity among local officials.” 非國家法令之殊, 蓋牧宰賢愚之異也. Again this shows that the formal institutional side is not the core problem for the ‘good men’.

point combined with calls for Fan Zhongyan to take their place,³⁹⁶ interspersed with memorials that demanded public discussion of, and thus access to, the negotiations with the Xi Xia.³⁹⁷ In many of these cases, the dire situation of the respective facet, as well as the general crisis, was emphasized to underline the need for real change.³⁹⁸ And yet, what the ‘good men’ suggested for the most part were minor changes and measures, and despite the fact that some of these would be approved, or even be “accepted with admiration,” *jiana* 嘉納, by the emperor,³⁹⁹ there is no indication that they were implemented to the satisfaction of the reformers, if at all. Put differently, in their own assessment the ‘good men’ at this point were being used for the performative needs of the emperor, much like Li Shu had been earlier, while remaining largely sidelined politically.

On the other hand, it also appears that for the time being, the ‘good men’ did not quite give the emperor what he wanted, despite the public profile they were assuming now: we have already discussed the possibility that the emperor in general had more agency in the decisions of his rule than hitherto assumed, and while the exact motivations and interests behind the promotion of the ‘good men’ must remain obscure, it is unlikely that Renzong had no agency in the process at all.

³⁹⁶ Attack on and counterattack by Ouyang Xiu: CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3395. The censors attack the vice chancellor Wang Juzheng and have him demoted, arguing that Fan Zhongyan should supplant him instead (7/1043). CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3399-99.

³⁹⁷ Ouyang Xiu, Yu Jing (7/1043): CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 2403-4. Note that the wording of Ouyang Xiu’s memorial reflects the one about this topic discussed above.

³⁹⁸ One example for this is a memorial by Ouyang Xiu on the danger of the robbers, that also repeats a lot of the general arguments about the situation in the realm (CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3419-3420).

³⁹⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3380. For the approval of Fan’s and Han’s suggestion on recommending local officials and holding their recommenders accountable: CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3386. Note that this is very much like one of the points in the ‘Ten-Point Memorial’, meaning that either it was not implemented at this point despite approval, or that the ‘Ten-Point Memorial’ was not actually initiating this measure.

In fact, a desire on his part to react in a visible way to the current series of crises, the uprisings, the natural phenomena, and of course the unruly barbarians, is very likely, much as it is described by James T.C. Liu.⁴⁰⁰ If we give at least some credence to the accusations of the ‘good men’, he was most interested in the performative side of this reaction to the crisis, not its concrete effects on the ground, and certainly not the decisive action and discerning personnel decisions that the ‘good men’ wanted. The following exchange will serve to reinforce the point: in 5/1043 the emperor said to his ministers, “since spring and summer there has been no rain, all hope is lost for a normal change of seasons, this must be caused by me not being virtuous, [because] I merely act by limiting myself to eating coarse food, praying meticulously, and shouldering the blame inside the palace.” The reply by Zhang Dexiang 章得象 (978–1048) might be representative of what the emperor wanted to hear: “Your Majesty is heeding the heavenly mandate and loving the people, you perfected your sincerity in this way, [however] it is we ministers who are doing a bad job fulfilling the duties of assisting the emperor in governing, we are unable to *disseminate and advertise* [your] good government, to summon harmonic *qi*, and excessively have caused Your Majesty to worry.” The emperor replied: “I and you, my officials, have never failed to pay attention to the trifling matters at court; [and yet], it is the hardship among the people that we particularly need to pay close attention to, if there is something that benefits the realm, we must implement it. You and the others have their task cut out for you in seeking advice with an impartial mind, so as to respond to heaven’s wish.”⁴⁰¹ Another anecdote might serve to further illustrate the nature of Renzong’s care for the people: a certain Li Chudu

⁴⁰⁰ James T.C. Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 41.

⁴⁰¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3377. This would also fit well with Lamouroux’ finding, namely the goal “to publicize imperial power.” Lamouroux, “Song Renzong’s Court Landscape.” p. 84.

owned a *feibai*-calligraphy by Renzong, which read “safety and happiness to the four classes of people”. The colophon, “written when drunk in the Huacheng Hall, bestowed on a palace lady,” inspired the commentator to laud the fact that Renzong thought of the people even at times of ‘leisure’, but I daresay there are other possible interpretations.⁴⁰² The contention here is that Zhang Dexiang’s reply is equally if not more enlightening as to what kind of answer the emperor wanted than his own assertions that they needed to pay attention to the hardship of the people, the point is that Renzong was not very interested in the practicalities, nor could he in his position have a good understanding for how the measures proclaimed did or did not play out on the ground. The emperor sought a proposal of coherent, unified solutions that went beyond the trifles of everyday government, proclaimed in a form that would serve to advertise his good rule to the world; the practical target, as far as there was any, could only have been to get equally ostentatious results, results which ‘proved’ that the hardship of the people had been alleviated. Yet, as we will see below, ultimately this was supposed to bring about *taiping*, all-encompassing peace, a much more elusive and universal goal. Its fulfillment would have to include an agreement with the Xi Xia, thereby removing the most blatant source of disorder. Fan Zhongyan and the others would be useless for that, but it was the response concerning domestic policy and the literati community that made it necessary to call on those literati, that is the ‘good men’, who in their own and everybody else’s judgment had the best rhetorical and literary skills to give this response the desired, coherent form, while having enough credibility as administrators; given their history of straight-talking, it is hard to imagine that Renzong’s appeal for the courtiers to seek straight advice was not directed at Fan Zhongyan and his associates.

⁴⁰² *Wenjian houlu*. j. 1, p. 4.

It is not that the ‘good men’ did not respond to these calls for proposals at all, indeed if Li Tao’s chronology is correct, Fan himself handed in an itemized memorial to do so for the previous example of the emperor’s call for proposals.⁴⁰³ However, it is precisely the problem that things like “blame yourself,” as well as concrete, practical, but at the same time non-committal items such as “send officials to supervise pardons”, “get local officials to investigate about orphaned and destitute families”, “record families of soldiers KIA”, “render help to displaced people”, “make sure that pardons are administered correctly”, followed by a bare minimum of general classical references, would not be what the emperor wanted to hear, at least judging by the exchange above. Thus, the argument to be made here is that at this point, the masters of the public, performative argument all but declined to *disseminate* and *advertise* Renzong’s good government in the grand form that he wanted them to do so. After all their attacks on ‘empty words’ and empty ritual responses, the ‘good men’ could not allow themselves to become part of such a performance without being more certain of their influence and access, to make sure that core demands would be implemented not just in a token way. All things considered, and especially given the recent history of Fan’s stints at court, as well as the fate of earlier suggestions made by the ‘good men’ and others, there was good reason for them to be suspicious of the imperial overtures, and question that the emperor indeed was willing to be as forceful and discriminating as they wanted him to be, or that his majesty had been convinced by their intellectual argument.

⁴⁰³ CB. vol. 6, j. 141, p. 3377-78. The commentator notes that the dating needs to be further investigated. The memorial does seem somewhat truncated.

It seems to me that what ensued between 5/1043 and 9/1043 therefore was very much like a tug of war, in which the ‘good men’ continued their public campaign for influence and standing,⁴⁰⁴ always making ostentations use in their argument of so-called public opinion in different forms, as well as whatever signs of appreciation Renzong had given them, but also continuing to seek outside appointments, and declining offices,⁴⁰⁵ a campaign which, however, went on and found its climax *after* Fan and the others had been officially called to the capital and given court positions. Under these premises the publicly circulated yet unofficial *Benlun*, dated to 1042, takes on somewhat of a new significance as a text that in all probability better exemplified the form of a totalizing, comprehensive, grand solution that the emperor wanted to see handed in officially. Especially in comparison to this essay, the memorials that they did hand in through official channels must have appeared listless and pettifogging. On the other end of the rope, the emperor in turn therefore tried to get them to perform the desired public role that they seemed to be so good at, without actually giving them too much status and high position, while he or other forces for the most part also kept them away from the treaty negotiations, as becomes apparent in the continued demands by the good men to at least discuss them publicly, or have their own suggestions and criticisms heeded.⁴⁰⁶ As late as 8/1043, Cai Xiang, Han Qi, and Ouyang Xiu

⁴⁰⁴ Commentators assume that the goal of the campaign was reached when Fan et al. were recalled to the capital. See for example: Bol, “Government Society and the State.” p. 139.

⁴⁰⁵ As late as 7/1043, Fan Zhongyan declined the vice chancellor post that the censors had recommended him for, asking how a leading minister could be appointed by remonstrance officials (CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3398-99), and sought and was given a military appointment as pacification commissioner of Shanxi (CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3402-3; SS. vol. 1, j. 11 (*benji*), p. 216). Supposedly he also requested that on behalf of Han Qi. There is a note later (8/1043) that Han memorialized to finally send Fan to the border, for Fan never had left the capital for that appointment, but Han Qi was sent there instead (CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3421).

⁴⁰⁶ See those discussed above (Ouyang Xiu: CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3403-04. Yu Jing: CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3404). Essentially all the memorials by ‘good men’ on the different issues of the negotiations show that they had no direct say in the proceedings and decisions. Ouyang Xiu and Yu Jing: CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3405-3407; Han Qi: p. 3408-9; Ouyang Xiu, Cai Xiang, Yu Jing: p. 3409-3411. The one by Ouyang also discusses the different interests and opinions of the ones demanding peace, and in this way replicates a debate that apparently in his opinion did not take

requested that Fan Zhongyan be allowed to leave for Shaanxi in his function as military commander, supposedly to make sure that everything was prepared should the questionable peace proposal of the Xi Xia indeed have been insincere.⁴⁰⁷

In the end, both the ‘good men’ and the emperor seemed to get what they wanted: even before Fan was promoted to and accepted the position of vice chancellor in 8/1043, the remonstrators, that is, Ouyang Xiu, Cai Xiang, and Yu Jing, among others, were granted access to the inner court “to speak up on the spot if there was some mistake”, as the request by Tian Kuang put it,⁴⁰⁸ although Ouyang Xiu in a somewhat later memorial still acted ‘as if’ he had no direct access to the decisions and information regarding the Xi Xia peace.⁴⁰⁹ Finally, early the following month, in 9/1043, Fan Zhongyan and the other ‘good men’ allegedly gave in to the repeated calls from the emperor, and handed in their ‘Ten-Point Program’. However, this in fact did not happen without some veiled threats by the emperor, who told Tian Kuang in 8/1043 that he “considered seeking a reputation a mistake, and would focus his intention on revering and preserving the status quo”, prompting a reply that very much echoed the arguments that we have heard from Fan Zhongyan about the fame of the sages coming from real deeds, and exhorted the emperor to follow the example of the sages in his frugal, activist, and discerning government, gaining the

place where the decisions were made; Han Qi’s two memorials have a somewhat more general thrust, if still largely dealing with military issues, and ends by promising *taiping*: p. 3412-3414 (all 7/1042).

⁴⁰⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3421-3422.

⁴⁰⁸ Access of censors: CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3415. Promotion of Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi: CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3417.

⁴⁰⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3421-3423. When arguing against a certain rumor about a decision, he pleads ignorance whether it is true or not.

same reputation as the sages in the process.⁴¹⁰ For this reason it need not be entirely without grounding when the sources claim that Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi acted out of fear when they submitted their ten-point reply to the emperor's request, given the noises made by the emperor of closing the door on them, which repeated the criticism against the 'good men' that is so familiar to us by now.⁴¹¹

Chapter 5. More than just institutions: the pivotal role of public recognition for 'good men' in the *qingli* reform program

After several months of public campaigning on one side and political maneuvering on the other, in 9/1043, the mutual wooing between emperor and the 'good men' was apparently successful, and the emperor received his grand performance:

The emperor had promoted Fan Zhongyan, Han Qi, Fu Bi, and the others, and each time they entered for an audience, he surely put the task of heavenly peace before them, and numerous times ordered them to memorialize in an itemized form about the important issues of the current times. Fan Zhongyan told others: 'It has been achieved that the emperor is employing me, but things have a sequence, and moreover changing evils takes a long time and stability, this is not something that one can achieve in a short time.' The emperor repeatedly conferred on them hand-written edicts to direct and urge them, saying: 'responding to the hopes of people in the capital and in the provinces, I have promoted you and the others out of sequence, now Han Qi has temporarily gone to Shanxi, and so Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi ought to go along with the chancellor Zhang Dexiang, and fully devote their minds to the affairs of the state, there cannot be anything that is off limits. Of the urgent matters of the current times, explain to me all those that you can report on.' Moreover, he opened the Hall of Heavenly Manifestations, and summoned them there for an audience, offering them a seat, and handing them brush and paper to make them write their memorial in his presence. Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi both were royally afraid and rose to show their respect, and then they withdrew and arranged their memorial as a list, which read: [...] ⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3416-17.

⁴¹¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3431.

⁴¹² CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3431. Immediately afterwards, Lü Yijian once again asks to resign, accompanied by Ouyang Xiu's attacks on him, his meddling, and his family (p. 3444-3446).

The fact that in the same month the ‘good men’ censors Wang Su, Yu Jing, Ouyang Xiu, and Cai Xiang were awarded clothing of a higher rank by the emperor, who again assured them that he had selected them personally, is indicative that they were indeed openly treated as one group by the court.⁴¹³ Note also the dissonance both in pace and in aim between the goals of the emperor and the ‘good men’, the former seeking heavenly peace, the latter a gradual remedy for the long-standing evils of the world. While it cannot be excluded that this dissonance was highlighted expost by the historiographers, it still is an important clue, pointing to possible reasons for the eventual downfall of the *qingli* reformers.

When discussing the thrust of the program, and possibly the sequence of reform that Fan was talking about in his comment, the aforementioned *Benlun*, ‘On Fundamentals’, represents a good place to start. We have seen a passage of the second part above, and discussed the second and the third part, in which Ouyang Xiu explains ritual in antiquity and proposes to reintroduce Confucian ritual into the general population to deprive Buddhism of its *raison-d’être*, giving evidence to the importance of ritual in his thinking. Yet, it is the first essay that talks most comprehensively about the five concrete problems of the current times, offering a systematic and coherent way of organizing the state and remedying these issues, which, however, at the same time emphasizes that there is a sequence of importance among them. After describing how things were done in the three dynasties, Ouyang argues that the situation in the times of the three sage kings that founded them was not so different than it was in later times, and that in fact the rulers of later eras also wanted to make things right, so it was not a question of internal attitude. The difference between them, that is, the reason why the former were successful, was that the sages

⁴¹³ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3447.

knew the importance and the sequence of things, whereas the latter-day rulers failed to “examine what was more or less fundamental, and did not know the proper sequence in which things should be done, and that is all there is to it.”⁴¹⁴ He goes on:

Today’s tasks are numerous, and those which should be put first are five. Two of those are things that officials know, three of those then are things that they have not so far thought about. In order to meet the expenses of the realm, nothing is more urgent than the [administration of] finances, and in order to have an institutionalized way of [managing] war and peace in the realm, nothing is more urgent than the army, this is what the officials already know. But if the [administration of] finances is already far-reaching, but [in a way that] collecting them one knows no bounds, and in spending them there is no limit, then those below are more and more burdened, and those above are more and more troubled. If the army is strong, but one does not know how to put it to good use, then the soldiers become arrogant and stir up trouble. In order to be frugal in administering the finances and put the army to good use, there is nothing more urgent than establishing an [institutional] system. When a system [of institutions] has been put in place, the army can finally be dispatched, and the finances finally are sufficient to meet the expenses, and in order to collectively supervise this, nothing is more urgent than appointing [the right] people. Therefore to balance the budget and to regulate the military, one establishes laws to institutionalize them, employs the wise to administer the laws, and pays special attention to reputation so as to encourage the wise; to put these five in practice in a mutually reinforcing way, this is the common task of those who rule over all under heaven, it ought to be the most urgent matter for this generation, but is what is neglected by those who attend to [government] affairs. Today it is not the case that there is disorder within the four seas, or that there is cruelty in the government orders of the emperor, in terms of climate, seasons, floods, and droughts there are no major mishaps, the relationship between ruler and minister and the social hierarchy is not unharmonious.

[... So what is the reason for the problems, why is the concept of ‘all under heaven’ not becoming reality? It only is because these five are not provided. Ouyang Xiu then goes into the details of how even the two areas that are known, the finances and the military, are not administered properly. Despite an elaborate technique to extract resources from the hard-working farmers and merchants, there is not enough surplus to be stored for bad days; the soldiers are arrogant, and part of the problem is manifest in the deferential language used to command them, as well as rewards being taken for granted without actual achievement. All this shows that things are not going well.]

As to the financial means that are extracted exhaustively and still are not sufficient, this is because there are no fixed amounts. The soldiers dare to be arrogant, because directing them is not yet done using the right method. From this one knows that that the [institutional] system has not been established. As to the budget being in deficit and the soldiery being arrogant, laws and institutions not being unified (*yi* 一), and there being no one who is roused and forgets himself in dedication to his country, from these things one knows that one is at the moment not employing the right people. ‘Not employing the right people’ does not mean that there are no right people. As to those who may have talent and have accumulated knowledge, merely on account of the fact that at the current time one all but hates when someone is ‘wanting to gain a reputation’, each of them conceals what is in him and restrains himself, not daring to act vigorously and in the open, for fear of being on the verge of gaining [a good] reputation [and] thereby ‘committing’ what the people currently hate. Therefore everyone exchanges wisdom for stupidity, stupidity does not have any consequences, wisdom is slandered and hated, and as a consequence this leads to the political affairs of the realm becoming neglected, and nobody daring to exert himself in dealing with them. This problem of not esteeming [a good] reputation is the greatest peril of all under heaven. *Therefore I say that this is the thing that would get rid of all five.*⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ QSW. vol. 34, j. 730, p. 370-371. This is the first of the original three parts.

⁴¹⁵ 論本. QSW. vol. 34, j. 730, p. 371-372. I have profited from the translation in: de Bary, Bloom, *Sources of Chinese tradition*, Vol. I. p. 591-593.

Ouyang Xiu is proposing a combination of five interdependent and mutually reinforcing aspects of government: finances, the military, a farsighted and unified system of laws and institutions, and the appointment of the right people, by drawing on their reputation and cherishing those with a good name. A ruler ought to pay attention to these five at once. However, Ouyang Xiu is adamant that there is a correct sequence of things that should come first and last, of more important things and less important ones. Combined with his closer analysis of the ills, but also the favorable circumstances of the current times, the hierarchy within these issues becomes very clear: given that the state already collected large amounts of resources from the hard-pressed people, without being able to fully provide for all its needs or make provisions for bad times, and in view of the ineffectualness of the already huge standing army, the problem must lie with the institutional system that lacks farsightedness, the failure to appoint the right officials, and finally the fact that in the way elite-society currently worked there was no incentive for good men to make a name for themselves and to stick out with their good words and deeds; instead they were drawn to hide their wisdom and swim with the crowd so as to not get punished for their ‘crime’ of seeking a reputation. This problem, the one that Fan Zhongyan already had lamented and argued against in his letter of 1030, is the most cumbersome, and solving it “would get rid of all five” in Ouyang Xiu’s opinion. His ruminations about the singular historic position that the Song were in serve to reinforce his point: the Song had successfully overcome the chaos and disorder of the Five Dynasties, it had built a state that was rich in resources and had an army numbering in the millions, and yet, without a system of regulations that would make good use of these assets, and without the people to administer the system in the right way, all these successes were for naught. Even the best system would only be as good as the people administering it on every level, and to find the best people for each position, a mechanism of public recognition of the good and

bad was essential, whereas the current way of criticizing people, that is, the ‘good men’, for trying to make a name for themselves by acting in a public fashion, was detrimental to the whole enterprise. Ouyang’s call in the last, omitted paragraph for the emperor to appoint one or two enlightened ministers to plan this amounts to nothing else but a jumpstart for this mechanism of public recognition that would lead to the reform of the whole system.⁴¹⁶ Implicitly, however, the opposite also would hold true: if the ‘good men’ were not recognized, then all the other aspects would not be successful either.

From this perspective, already the *way* in which the emperor had promoted, and then asked Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi to proclaim their reform ideas served the purpose of the last item, the one deemed most important by Ouyang Xiu, thereby giving Fan Zhongyan and company the public recognition that they needed to turn the tide in favor of the ‘good men’, enhancing their public reputation as ‘good’ people and awarding them the projective power to work for their goals, and inspiring others to gain a public reputation by their good deeds as well. This is also an answer to the potential question why the ‘good men’ did not simply negotiate at the outset for even higher positions in the hierarchy, and overall were unsuccessful in capturing the governing institutions, as Smith has rightly pointed out:⁴¹⁷ public acknowledgement of the ‘good men’ and their ideas was more important, and might get them further and give them a greater impact, aside from the problem that for all we know the emperor consciously kept them and others away from

⁴¹⁶ QSW. vol. 34, j. 730, p. 373.

⁴¹⁷ Smith compares the *qingli* with the *xining* reforms and notes that the *qingli* reformers were much less successful at taking control of the government institutions, which is why they were also much less able to uphold their reforms for a longer period of time. I wholeheartedly agree that they did not capture the government institutions, but would argue that they never had a chance at that due to the resistance of the emperor, and that this was not their only, or even main goal in the first place. Smith, “Anatomies of Reform.” p. 17-22.

dominating the court and at no time intended to give the ‘good men’ such positions beyond the vice chancellor position of Fan Zhongyan; in this respect we should point out again how short lived Lü Yijian’s own hold on supreme institutional power had been. In other words, the public, in the form of ‘public reputation’, and made sincere, not empty, was not just a means to an end, or a peripheral concept, but instead constituted an intricate part of their reformatory program, more important even than institutional hegemony. A memorial tentatively dated 10/1043, that is, after the program had been handed in, offers corroboration for the claim that the public endorsement by the emperor was already an important goal of the ‘good men’; in it Ouyang Xiu made use of this new standing by extensively recounting what the emperor had done, and how this showed the emperor’s support for renewal and the promotion of good people, an indication of how important this public act of support was for the reformers. Together with a set of earlier memorials in which Ouyang attacks Lü Yijian (Lü Yijian subsequently ‘resigns’ once more) and his family and alleged allies, and renews his complaint about the ministers in charge ignoring his suggestions, the memorial at the same time speaks to the lingering insecurity about their status at court that the ‘good men’ still felt, qualifying what Ouyang Xiu and the sources say about the public approval and the complete support of the emperor at this point.⁴¹⁸ It would seem that the tug of war was still going on:

⁴¹⁸ Memorials against Lü and family: CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444-3447; attacking Li Shu as Lü factionalist: p. 3448-9; final demotion of Li Shu, with help by Wu Yu: p. 3459. In two more memorials, Ouyang Xiu complains that his suggestions about robbers have not been heeded, and demands that the high ministers look into his suggestions or come up with their own; in the second one he also reiterates his suggestion about inspectors, lamenting that he had been ignored before, and that the oversight had remained ‘empty words’. Here he also refers to the handwritten order that prompted the ‘Ten-Point Memorial’ and reiterates the importance of officials, lest orders become ‘empty words’ (CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3462-3467). When attacking an incompetent military leader, Ouyang Xiu makes a similar argument as in ‘On Fundamentals’ about choosing the right people, and once more laments that his earlier suggestions have not been heeded (CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3476-3478). At the end of the ‘Ten-Point Program’ the *Changbian* states that the emperor trusted Fan and his associates, and completely accepted what they had said (CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444). However, the fact that there was another memorial in which Fan Zhongyan, prompted by the emperor, reiterated the ten points would suggest a more drawn out process than the *Changbian* would allow for (QSW. vol. 18, j. 372, p. 113).

I have heard that since Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi, and the others have been [called on] by personal imperial edict, there already has been an itemized list of government measures, one absolutely must decide and choose it for implementation. I [also] have heard that since antiquity a ruler who wanted to attain [good] government, had to depend on people who were of one heart and made a concerted effort, who got along and supported each other, this was called one chance in a million. Today Zhongyan and the others have encountered the sagely enlightenment of Your Majesty, one can say this is an opportunity rare to come by, and [regarding] Your Majesty availing himself of Zhongyan and the others, these also can be said to be ministers hard to come by. Your Majesty already attended to them with all his heart, and they also each exert their minds to think and report, [when the situation] above and below is like that, I say that there is nothing that cannot be accomplished, it is merely [a question] of how to attend to and implement it.

In the event, Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi are men you have promoted out of order and completely of your own accord. When you first employed them, all under heaven already congratulated each other, but they still secretly said that now that you were able to select them, you did not know how to employ them. Now we have heard that you have extraordinarily opened [the Hall of] Heavenly Manifestation, to seek their advice in a casual way, personally writing an imperial order, urging them and exhorting them, and afterwards [everybody] in the capital and the provinces was in an uproar, completely surprised and at the same time delighted. These two grand occurrences, indeed already have officially been announced to the capital, and within a short time have spread everywhere [in the provinces], and all say that so far there has been no case of appointing great ministers in this [ostentatious] way. The people of the realm, crane their necks and wipe their eyes to see what Your Majesty employing these people actually is capable of achieving, and which of the measures that these two ministers report on Your Majesty wants to implement.

Therefore, the success and failure of Your Majesty hang on this single action, the weal and woe of the people, are tied to this moment. When talking about it with this background [in mind], then Fan Zhongyan and the others cannot but with all their heart exert themselves to offer their service [in repayment to your kindness], and Your Majesty should do none other than forcefully supporting and implementing [what they suggest], seeing to it that [Your Majesty] above does not bring disgrace to Your ability to judge people, and that below one does not lose hope within the four seas. It is not that I do not know your focused determination, and not that you are inattentive and negligent yourself; moreover the great ministers within and without, are of the same mind in their worry about the country, and certainly will not envy each other. However, in my view, [from among] what Fan Zhongyan and the others have mentioned, one first must put an end to the problems of undeserved [promotions], following the old routine, and over-leniency, and only then can one redress the long-standing ills of these times.

To attend to things in this manner apart from anything else will attract the anger of lesser people, and it cannot be avoided that one is confused and distracted by baseless contributions [to the debate], moreover, the treacherous people that have not been gotten rid of, will wait for an opportunity to slander and lie; if one listens to them even to a small extent, then one will not accomplish anything. I say that at the outset of this process, [the emperor] above and [the officials] below must be united in their efforts. The anger of all the lesser men, Fan Zhongyan and the others need to take upon themselves, but the baseless suggestions and treacherous slander, Your Majesty also must firmly resist. Waiting for it [to take its due] course and be gradually completed, you yourself will be able to see the success with each passing day. I hope that Your Majesty will pay attention, and will accomplish that from beginning to end, then this will be the blessing of the state, and the good fortune of all under heaven.⁴¹⁹

Both the emperor and the general audience are reminded here of the ostentatious approval that the emperor had bestowed on the ‘good men’ and their reform program, a reminder that would not have been necessary if that approval, or the broader support by court officials, especially in

⁴¹⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3479-3480.

high positions, had been a given. In view of later events it is remarkable that Ouyang Xiu makes no effort to hide the fact that his associates Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi, and the others were a group that cooperated and supported each other, already at this point all but admitting to being a faction, an admission that can only be veiled a little by his appeal to the unity of officials “within and without” that worry about the state. Thus, when Ouyang Xiu also preemptively presents a guilty party for the possible failure of his group in the future, he is essentially taking up the argument that Fan Zhongyan had made in a different situation in 1030: bad people fearing for their privileges will make hollow arguments and resort to slander; to prevent them succeeding the emperor needed to stand united with the ‘good men’.

The elaborate account of the tensions, motives, and interests behind the proclamation of the program in the previous chapter, together with the point made here that the act of being asked to proclaim it already met the most important demand in Ouyang Xiu’s program highlights one thing: that neither the time that the ‘good men’ published the ‘Ten-Point Memorial’, nor the form that they proclaimed it in, or even its demonstrative comprehensiveness and institutional thrust may have been entirely of the ‘good men’s’ original volition. Their actions were geared towards being part of the emperor’s performance, and thereby receive a public token of recognition from him to enable them to support their argument and begin their good work of changing officialdom, and it is very likely that they in some way adjusted the form of the program to the restraints and demands that this situation placed on them. This is not to deny that most parts of it, and key concepts, had been discussed before by ‘good men’ in various forms, as we have seen with

Ouyang Xiu's suggestion earlier.⁴²⁰ However, the constant criticism of their performative way of doing politics placed another restriction on their program, namely to avoid the impression that they now in turn furnished the public with their own empty words; while the *Changbian*-comment that all but one of the ten proposals of the program were implemented is not borne out by the sources,⁴²¹ the concrete selection and nature of the measures shows that they in fact intended to do what they promised to do, that is, reconnect the form of the political performance that they had been an active part of with the political action that they had talked about. And yet, it is precisely the fact that they attempted to provide real, doable measures for all five aspects, which allows us to see that the hierarchy of importance that Ouyang Xiu proposed for them in 'On Fundamentals' still was very much present, and that within their diverse proposals a much more limited core set of immediate goals can be identified.

The text of the proposal is too long to be given here in full, and has been translated into a Western language before,⁴²² but the introduction and the one part that talks about the provincial inspectors (*anchashi* 按察使) that we know from Ouyang Xiu's earlier memorial should suffice to provide an impression about the form of the text and the argument that it makes, before we turn to a more comprehensive analysis of the content of the program:

⁴²⁰ Skonicki discusses earlier memorials by Fan Zhongyan that already outline key concepts that would become part of the measures. (Skonicki, "Employing the right kind of men." 1027 letter to executive officials: p. 39; four memorials of 1036: p. 61-65). Especially the four memorials of 1036 argue for a way the ruler (QSW. vol. 18, j. 386, p. 409-414) and the ministers ought to act, and what problems ought to be addressed, not necessarily for a fixed institutional solution to those problems. It is Sun Mian who in 5/1041 comes closest to arguing for the concrete institutional measures earlier. For Sun Mian's memorials, see: CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3124-3127.

⁴²¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444.

⁴²² Buriks, "Fan Chung-yen's Versuch einer Reform." Note that Buriks separates the analysis from the concrete suggestions.

Our dynasty put an end to the chaos of the Five Dynasties, its wealth is encompassing everything within the four seas, [but] passed on for 80 years, the institutional fabric and system of laws, over time has been eroded and infringed on; below, officials are accumulating, outside court the people are in distress, the borders are unsettled, the insurgents are arrogant and aggressive, there is no other way but to conduct reforms to remedy that. But if one wants to set the peripheral things (*mo* 末) right, one must begin by leveling its foundation (*ben* 本); if one wants to clean the stream, one needs to clean up its source. I dared to briefly sketch the way of monarchs of previous eras, and to seek out the achievements of the founders of the present dynasty, and gathered what can be implemented [among them] in an itemized memorial. I wish that Your Majesty would accord with the desire (*xin* 心) of all under heaven, and forcefully implement these measures, so that in all probability the legal system would have a [proper] setup, the institutional fabric would be put in order, and consequently the dynasty will be all-encompassing and prolonged, and all under heaven invariably will be blessed.⁴²³

Note that in the preamble the theme of good reputation is entirely absent, instead the emphasis lies on the institutional solutions proposed; moreover, it casts a less positive light on the current situation than Ouyang Xiu did. Having said this, otherwise the language is reminiscent (sequence, *ben mo*) of the first part of *Benlun* by Ouyang Xiu. In the forth item [IV], ‘selecting head officials’, Fan Zhongyan discusses the necessity to improve local government by sending inspectors:

The fourth item talked about selecting head officials [of administrative units] (*ze guanzhang* 擇官長): I have heard that today’s prefects, and county magistrates, are the equivalent of the feudal lords of ancient times; the joy and sorrow of a place, the weal and woe of the people are intricately tied to these men, therefore during the ages at times of enlightened, sagely [government], one without fail took these appointments seriously. Today, however, one does not ask if they are stupid or wise, and does not compare their abilities, and time and again [merely] draws on confirmation of their rank [of seniority], to promote them to head local civil and military administrations. [However], those [among them] who are weak will be unable to restrain the clerks, and so they get to parasitize the people; those [among them] who are overly active, in this way merely [seek] to make their name known, and greatly harm matters. The foundation of the state, for this reason is withering away. Although the court is perfectly attentive and diligent, how could the realm be revived!

With the financial commissioners together with the judicial commissioners inspecting the subordinate heads of municipal administration, one ought to be able to pull out the wise from among the crowd. I ask to extraordinarily hand down an edict, charging the chancellery and the military commission to each select a total of ten financial and judicial commissioners, and ten prefects of key prefectures. [In addition to that,] one delegates the two drafting groups in total to recommend ten prefects, the vice financial commissioners and the Assistants together to recommend five prefects, the vice censors-in-chief, associate censors, and the ‘three bureaus’ of the censorate in total to recommend five prefects, the prefect of Kaifeng and the judges to in total recommend five prefects; the financial commissioners and judicial commissioners of one circuit after the other each together recommend a total of five men as prefects, and a total of ten people as county magistrates; the prefects and controller generals of the separate prefectures together recommend a total of two men [each?] as county magistrates. When selecting [from among] the men recommended according to the previous stipulation, those with more recommenders are ranked first to be appointed. Accordingly one orders the bureau of evaluation, and the one for personnel assignments, for the appointed prefects and county magistrates to from now on comprehensively record this and incorporate it with their resume and evaluation, reporting the number of recommenders, delegating the chancellery to review it. When the

⁴²³ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3431.

assignments have been completed, one then reports them in audience. If one recommends and selects in this way, then the right people will in all probability be appointed to the offices of all circuits, [who then] on behalf of the emperor will be attentive to the people, make equal their public service duties, will be magnanimous in taxing them, causing each and everyone to be secure and tranquil. (This was implemented in the 10th month).⁴²⁴

At the heart of this measure lies the well known demand of the ‘good men’ to be selective in personnel decisions, but Fan’s suggestion adds yet another institutional solution to the problem of how best to extend this selectivity to local officials, and thus those administrators whose quality, according to their argument, had the greatest impact on the people. Fan Zhongyan incorporates the financial commissioners cum inspectors that were the somewhat unintended result of Ouyang Xiu’s earlier suggestion, and takes up the latter’s demand that if the financial commissioners were to be charged with inspection duties they would have to be selected carefully, in this case by the ‘two administrations’, *liang fu* 兩府, the chancellery and the military commission, which were the most elevated court institutions; these would also directly choose the most important prefects. Presumably the *liang fu* were still connected by virtue of the personnel union that despite the resignation of Lü Yijian apparently still continued.⁴²⁵ It seems that by now the ‘good men’ had given up their earlier campaign of trying to divest these two administrative bodies from their secret influence and bring in the *liang zhi* as discursive unit. One would assume that the several ‘good men’ who had been appointed to these offices had made it more trustworthy in the eyes of Fan and his allies. However, added to this known scheme is a pyramid of selection based on the number of recommendations that the local officials could garner in their support among the court hierarchy and higher local officials; in other words, what Fan Zhongyan suggested was an institutionalized way of incorporating the reputation of

⁴²⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3437-38.

⁴²⁵ When Lü resigns from the *pan* position, he still is concurrent commissioner of military affairs (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3290). The *Song shi (biao)* reports that the concurrent assignments were only given up in 10/1045 (SS. vol. 16, j. 211, p. 5469).

candidates among higher officials into the appointment process, thus reintroducing Ouyang Xiu's central concept without being overly explicit about it, or calling it *shang/hao ming*. Already earlier in 1038, Han Qi had struck a similar cord in the course of the campaign against the 'infirm' chancellors, when he argued that even legendary founding figures in antiquity had not relied on their own judgment to make important personnel decisions, and had instead made sure to consult the 'assembly' (*zhong* 衆) in the process.⁴²⁶ Note that this recommendation aspect is not mentioned in the record about the implementation of this measure, which only retained the stipulation that the 'two administrations' should select the right men as inspectors, who then would select the right prefects, who in turn would select good magistrates.⁴²⁷

In the following discussion of the remainder of the program, rather than strictly following the arrangement given in the text, it seems more instructive to follow the sequence of importance among the aspects of government that Ouyang Xiu established in his *Benlun*, that is, cherishing and drawing on the good reputation of literati, in order to get the best people for the positions, which then would be able to fill out and implement a unified system of institutions and laws in a way that the finances and the army would be brought in order as well. Indeed, the first four of the reform measures aim at making sure to get the right people on all different levels of government,

⁴²⁶ CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2861. In the remainder of the memorial he makes specific accusations against the current chancellors, invokes heavenly portents, and asks for his resignation should his advice be deemed unsuitable to be implemented (p. 2862-64). In his call a bit later for employing his associates, he claims that a majority/the assembly, *zhong*, considers them loyal and upright (p. 2866).

⁴²⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3480-3482. On this occasion (10/1043), the first inspectors were promoted, and Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi wrote a memorial about the details, and justified the inspectors by claiming that there was a direct correlation between them and local supervisory offices in antiquity. In 7/1044, after the 'faction' incident, Fan Zhongyan, among other suggestions for local administration, reiterates the idea of the inspectors cum commissioners, which leads to an edict tasking the financial commissioners with recommending capable local officials in their jurisdiction (CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3670-3673). The memorial again makes the claim that the financial and judicial commissioner cum inspector scheme still was 'empty noise', since they merely fulfilled the norm, or sought to curry favor, without getting it right.

introducing institutionalized ways of measuring their ‘goodness’ and reputation such as the one we have seen above in measure IV.

The first item (I), ‘to make demotions and promotions strict and impartial’ (*ming chuzhi* 明黜陟), makes the argument that due to the way that promotions work at the moment, every civil or military official could be sure to be promoted after three or five years, respectively.⁴²⁸ This enabled them to simply wait for their turn, allegedly going so far as forming a cartel of bad administrators, banding up against those few officials who actually showed an interest in improving things on the ground. Moreover, many well-connected officials used their influence to ask for good positions, and in case of being assigned to the provinces would delay assuming office, and then despite not having achieved anything of note would be promoted to the next post. Fan Zhongyan requests that an edict be handed down that would tie promotions in the ‘two administrations’, that is, the chancellery and the military commission, to achievements, meaning officials following the old routine would have to remain in their post. For all other capital officials a two-tiered system would be implemented, in which officials who had been vouched for, or had undergone a review process by the office for promotions of capital personnel,⁴²⁹ received promotions every three years, while the rest had to wait five years for a promotion. Incentives for service outside of the capital were to be provided, and processes established to review misdeeds. Reviews and standard procedures involving recommendations by ‘many’ *duo*, or approval by the ‘assembly’ *zhong* of the department of state affairs *shangshusheng*, as well as a report to and endorsement by the emperor, should ensure that extraordinary achievements and

⁴²⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3431-3433.

⁴²⁹ This is a rough translation of the abbreviation *Kuwusi* 庫務司. Gong, *Songdai guanzhi cidian*. p. 101.

talent within and outside the capital still could lead to promotions out of cycle.⁴³⁰ The relevant offices for evaluation would keep records and make reports. When done in this way, officialdom would be revived and incentivized to do its best, the institutional fabric mended, and the powers of the sage kings and the founders of the dynasty would again be at the disposal of the emperor. The memorial that proclaimed this measure in 10/1043 reiterates that “if one does not appraise good and bad, then they [the officials] are not invigorated and honed, if one does not differentiate levels [of excellence], then they do not exert themselves.”⁴³¹ Here, the review process is stipulated in detail for the different positions and administrative units in the capital, including procedures how to deal with offenses, and at most levels recommendations were an intricate part of the review; depending on the case and rank in question, getting the minimum number of recommenders (five) obviated the need to wait until the end of the review-cycle, or shortened it by two years. Recommenders had to be reputable, and at least judging by the phrase *baoju* used in the original program could be made liable for the mistakes of their charges. In two memorials of 11/1043, Ouyang Xiu requests that the court be even more selective in the case of censorial positions, and limited the officials eligible to make these guaranteed recommendations to the vice censors-in-chief or officials especially selected for the purpose, since not all bad elements had been gotten rid of from among the two drafting groups (*liang zhi*). Note that this is the institution that he still had favored earlier in his call for more debates at court.⁴³²

⁴³⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3433.

⁴³¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3485.

⁴³² CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3494-3495.

The second item [II] of the program, ‘restrain undeserved promotions’ (*yi jiaoxing* 抑僥倖), dealt with two related problems: firstly, with the more general phenomenon that officials, especially those higher up in the hierarchy, on occasion of important state rituals and festivals were allowed to exercise their *yin*-privilege of recommending a son or more distant relative, leading to the situation that for some there would be a round of *yin*-recommendation every year. Secondly, positions in the academies were not very selective, and were especially sought after for the sons of high officials; as a consequence these institutions failed to live up to the elite ideal that had inspired their founding. In the former case the program suggested a scheme that limited the *yin*-privilege on the different levels of the hierarchy, and tied it to two years of continuous service in one position, turning it into a privilege earned by achievements, rather than a right.⁴³³

Academicians would henceforth be vigorously examined before being admitted, and no high official would be allowed to ask for such a posting for his son; one version of the examination process for academicians proclaimed in the edict in 11/1043 also included guaranteed recommendations by two officials of the two administrative offices (*liang fu*) and three from the two departments (*liang sheng*), which seems a rather tall order.⁴³⁴ In a supportive memorial following this edict, Ouyang Xiu singled out a son of Lü Yijian, Gongchuo, among others as examples of the bad practice of appointing sons of officials to the academies, and for this selection process also suggested pre-selecting recommenders, who then would be allowed to make recommendations, a suggestion that seems to have been followed in 4/1044.⁴³⁵ Another

⁴³³ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3433-3435.

⁴³⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3501.

⁴³⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3501-3502. Edict about selection of recommenders for filling academician posts in 4/1044: CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3580.

edict handed down the same month (11/1043) aimed at limiting *yin*-privilege promotions; it introduced elements of examination and guaranteed recommendation (three to five, at times from relatively high ranking officials, depending on position) to the process of admitting *yin*-recommendees, as well as making detailed stipulations for the *yin*-privileges that civil and military officials should have henceforth.⁴³⁶ Both the first and second points of criticism had been made in 5/1041 by Sun Mian, who also had suggested to promote, demote, and keep on officials solely on their deeds, and to limit the number of *yin*-recommendations according to an official's rank in the hierarchy.⁴³⁷

The third item [III], 'refining the civil-service examination' (*jing gongju* 精貢舉), changed the institutional setup of both the *jinshi*- and the *zhuke*-examination in a way that ended the preference for ornate style, rote memorization, and detailed knowledge of formal requirements and textual details in favor of deeper understanding of the subjects, the principle (*yi* 義), and the Way (*dao* 道). Schools were to be established, and teachers employed. The way to do this for the *jinshi*-exam was to test candidates first in the policy questions (*ce* 策) and the essay (*lun* 論) of the exam, and only then administer the poetry test; first- and second-time takers of the exams would be failed instantly if they did not pass either of the first two exam-parts, ensuring that candidates who merely sported poetic talents would not get the opportunity to shine; however, this stipulation was dropped for those taking the exams for the third time and more, to alleviate the impact of the measure for this group of candidates. The *zhuke*-exam would be changed so as

⁴³⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3503-3505.

⁴³⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3124-3125.

to test the candidates' understanding of the significance of the classics *jingzhi* 經旨, again allowing for modifications in favor of candidates who had taken the test several times according to the old rules. Schools were to be erected in order to recommend students; anonymous testing should be given up again for the local level, to make sure that the conduct of candidates had been scrutinized at least once in the process.⁴³⁸ In the promulgating edict of 3/1044, the latter stipulation was dropped, but candidates had to be enrolled in schools for 300 days before taking the local exam; regulations concerning guarantors for candidates exempt because they were caring for their parents show that the main purpose of mandatory schooling was to ensure that the conduct of candidates would be taken into account, an observation reinforced by the simultaneous memorial asking for these changes.⁴³⁹

This memorial deserves some attention, since it seems to show that the examination reform generated a court debate, and of the proposals made in 9/1043 garnered the broadest interest and support among officials not part of the 'faction of good men'; the program itself already appears to make an appeal to officials not part of the group and not convinced of the argument, referring to Jia Changchao as the source of the suggestion to change the order of exam subjects, while pointing out that, contrary to Ouyang Xiu's and Cai Xiang's demand for being strict about the

⁴³⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3435-3437.

⁴³⁹ Memorial and edict: CB. vol. 6, j. 147, p. 3563-3565. Another edict (1044/5) reacts to problems with getting enough teachers, and allows for adjusting or forgiving the minimum school days in these cases, if the candidate was ready otherwise (CB. vol. 6, j. 149, p. 3613). Yu Jing in 11/1044 expressed his dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic way the school measure had been handled in general, and especially the minimum required school days: while on one hand exceptions have been granted liberally, undermining the original order, on the other hand it still had the effect of forcing students to attend, even in cases where they would have preferred to stay away for economic reasons, turning the schools into a requirement and a chore in this way. This was not how one encouraged students in antiquity. Instead, one should expand schools to accommodate those who were willing to attend, and drop the requirements to ease the burden for poor people (CB. vol. 6, j. 153, p. 3714-5).

new rules, these needed some adjustment for the old hands who had taken the exams three times and more;⁴⁴⁰ finally, in 3/1044 an edict ordered a court debate about the topic, which led to said memorial being co-authored by eight officials, among whom only Ouyang Xiu represented the core of the ‘good men’.⁴⁴¹ Among the other signatories, the case of Zhang Fangping 張方平 (1007–1091) is most interesting: a connection to the ‘good men’ is suggested by recommendations made by Fan Zhongyan for the post of chief secretary of his military command in lieu of Ouyang Xiu, when the latter declined the post, and by Sun Mian as his own replacement as censor;⁴⁴² here, Zhang Fangping, together with Song Qi, Wang Gongchen,⁴⁴³ and others rendered a political service to Fan Zhongyan and company by co-signing a memorial that reflected very much what the program, and previous entries by the ‘good men’ had proposed to reform the exams, albeit in an ideologically more neutral way than the program or the edict itself, which did reiterate the ‘good men’s’ much repeated position, arguing for the need to discriminate between good and bad men.⁴⁴⁴ Generally speaking, the reform of the civil-service examination

⁴⁴⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3435-36.

⁴⁴¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 147, p. 3563.

⁴⁴² QSW. vol. 18, j. 370, p. 77; the reference to Ouyang Xiu declining the post suggests a date later than 6/1040, when Ouyang Xiu did so (CB. vol. 5, j. 127, p. 3020); for Sun Mian’s suggestion in third place after Tian Kuang and Ouyang Xiu, and before Zeng Gongliang, Cai Xiang, and Wang Su, see: CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3127. Zhang Fangping as censor also had been the other official mentioned in connection to Lü Yijian being concurrently promoted to lead the military commission in 7/1042, although he had suggested abolishing the commission altogether (CB. vol. 6, j. 137, p. 3281).

⁴⁴³ *Shaoshi wenjian lu* recounts that Wang Gongchen socially was closely connected to Ouyang Xiu, for they were in the same exam year, and related by marriage, but they were in ‘different factions’, one for Lü Yijian and the other for Fan Zhongyan, and that Ouyang Xiu belittled Wang. Wang’s conduct on another occasion is also tied to his being in Lü’s faction. *Wenjian lu*. j. 8, p. 80-81; j. 9, p. 90.

⁴⁴⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 147, p. 3563-3565.

was most suitable to garner and *display* widespread support for the reforms, given that we have seen that it already had played an important part in Li Shu's itemized proposal.

Yet, when push came to shove in 11/1044, several months after the famous incident where Fan Zhongyan admitted to forming a faction, these were the very officials who had a part in impeaching Su Shunqin, their co-signatory Wang Zhu and several others of the younger 'good men', purportedly aiming to harm Du Yan, Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi, and the others, who had recommended these men. Jia Changchao is alleged to have secretly directed them.⁴⁴⁵ After the *qingli* reform, in *qingli* 6 (2/1046), Zhang Fangping would reject central positions held by the 'good men', by defending formal standards in grading exam-writing, reducing recent changes in writing customs to mere fads without inherent normative value, and attacking the habit of late to ignore formal standards in favor of adopting new, "weird" ways of writing;⁴⁴⁶ in the same year he requested that debates and disagreements within the chancellery be kept secret, preventing the different positions from being made public; this was supposed to keep these debates from causing the public of officials at court to be divided into 'them and us' along the lines of the different arguments, leading to factionalism, disunity, and ultimately chaos and defeat; this proposal not only targeted the way the 'good men' used the public to advance their argument, implicitly it also goes against their assumption that the emperor and the court needed to be discriminating between 'them and us' on all levels of officialdom.⁴⁴⁷ In 4/1046 Zhang made an argument for reconsidering the suggestions of Fan Zhongyan regarding the privileged access to

⁴⁴⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 153, p. 3715-3717.

⁴⁴⁶ QSW. vol. 37, j. 785, p. 53-54. Shi Jie and his *Taixue* Style are singled out, note that Ouyang Xiu criticized this too. For the same text, see also: CB. vol. 7, j. 158, p. 3821-3822.

⁴⁴⁷ QSW. vol. 37, j. 785, p. 54.

positions for sons and brothers of officials, and not “dismiss the words because of the man”.⁴⁴⁸

Finally, in an undated part ‘On Ritual and Music’ of a series of essays, he held that it was sufficient to make the outward ritual forms and titles distinctive and exclusive, since “the true king when facing south (that is, taking the position due to a king) and governing, is but a name and implements, and nothing else”;⁴⁴⁹ it is hard not to read that as a rebuttal of the general position of the ‘good men’ on ritual discussed above, which in its different versions emphasized the intention behind outward ritual forms and insisted that the forms themselves were secondary.

In this way we continue the story of ambiguous relationships between actors that we have started to tell in previous chapters; after seeing there how intellectual commonalities and social relationships would not translate into straightforward political allegiances and assistance, the case of Zhang Fanping now shows that not all officials rendering political support to the ‘good men’ were firm believers in their ideas. This is true regardless of whether Zhang Fangping changed his mind after *qingli* or always had had a different opinion; together with the case of Song Qi, Wang Gongchen, and Jia Chanchao, his example shows that the ‘good men’ had made some inroads with officials, and managed to garner some cooperation or compliance from them as long as the emperor seemed to support them. However, it is also the case that this points to a correlation between certain shared ideas and the strength of political ties, seeing that Zhang Fangping and the other signatories jumped ship and distanced themselves from the ‘good men’ after the tide had turned against them; in the long run, Zhang’s enmity for the ‘good men’ was

⁴⁴⁸ CB. vol. 7, j. 158, p. 3824. This also seems to show that this part of the reforms had not been abolished up to this point.

⁴⁴⁹ 芻蕘論之六，禮樂論，車服. QSW. vol. 38, j. 810, p. 79.

either selective or temporary, for in 8/1056 Zhang Fangping was promoted together with Han Qi, and a memorial of his on water projects was read and praised by Fu Bi in front of the emperor.⁴⁵⁰

To recapitulate the thrust of measures I through IV, their aim was to put institutions in place to get the right men for all positions, institutions that in the original program, but also in some of the promulgating edicts, included consideration of the reputation of candidates among high officials, or more generally their conduct, in the process. Item five [V], ‘adjusting official land’ (*jun gongtian* 均公田), also concerned the personnel of local administration; it suggested providing sufficient material means to officials by overhauling the system of official land, and thus making sure that local officials would not be tempted into accepting bribes just because their official salary did not meet their needs and befit their status.⁴⁵¹ Items nine [IX] and ten [X] addressed a more general institutional problem, and as far as could be ascertained were not officially promulgated as such: the former, “extending favor and good faith” (*tan enxin* 覃恩信), lamented that today pardons of criminals and favors for the people were issued above, but not actually implemented below, rendering them ‘empty talk’, *kong wen* 空言; it suggests several criminal and institutional measures to make sure that these ritual acts were dependable again.⁴⁵² Item ten, ‘lending gravitas to orders and edicts’ (*zhong mingling* 重命令), then takes up a

⁴⁵⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4435-4436.

⁴⁵¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3438-3439. For the corresponding edict, see: CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3510. It details the amount of land that the different ranks would be entitled to. Note that as a prerequisite for this measure, a survey of official land was needed, which did not go well, presumably because some land was appropriated as official land that in fact had owners. Once more it was Yu Jing who pointed out that there were problems, and called for changes in the scheme to benefit the farmers (CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3511). There are other reports of problems with land surveys (CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3482).

⁴⁵² CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3442-3443. Note the reference to ancient rituals such as the hunting ritual that also come up in the *Benlun*.

problem that had been discussed before, namely that the court too easily listened to the different proposals from the ranks of officials, making them into faulty orders that then were changed too frequently to be credible and be implemented by the local officials; it suggested for these proposals a proper institutional procedure of scrutiny and discussion by the two administrations, to ensure that it was feasible and a long-term plan, so that in turn officials who failed to implement the orders could be punished severely.⁴⁵³ These two proposals clearly go back to the *kong wen*-argument outlined above.

Proposal eight [VIII] ‘decreasing the service duty’ (*jian yaoyi* 減徭役) ultimately also called for a nationwide reform scheme, but started from the more limited observation that population changes had caused the service duty to be distributed in an extremely unfair way in Henanfu. A reorganization scheme for local administrative units was suggested that reflected the current situation of the population, reducing the excessive demands made on the people, and also returning local personnel to farming duties; once it was successful in the worst-hit areas, it was to be extended to Damingfu and the rest of the country, but there is no record that it ever was.⁴⁵⁴ Given that the reasoning for this proposal was to make a service duty more just, this is an item that addresses the administration of taxes in the broadest sense, reflecting the demand made, for example, in the *Benlun* that taxes and duties were to be made fair and limited.

⁴⁵³ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3443-3444.

⁴⁵⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3442. Note that according to the footnote (p. 3444) this in one version of the text was the last item, possibly indicating its low importance. Implemented partially in Henan, 5/1044 (CB. vol. 6, j. 149, p. 3617).

It is only suggestion six [VI] ‘strengthening agriculture’ (*hou nongsang* 厚農桑) that more directly addressed the financial situation and the plight of the people caused by the state neglecting good administration, as well as the fact that “the method of encouraging and educating (the people), exists in name but not in deed”.⁴⁵⁵ Again this was done from the vantage point of personal observations that Fan made when on local duty in Suzhou and elsewhere: most of the proposal is taken up by a description of the situation in Jiangnan, the two Zhe circuits, where public works such as polders, canals, and dikes had been neglected because local administration failed to feel responsible for these issues. This greatly reduced the yield of these areas, which nominally were the centers of agricultural production. However, rather than directly proposing to remedy these and other problems he mentioned, Fan Zhongyan instead suggested an institutional method for how to address these issues henceforth on a national level: each Fall, the court should order the financial commissions of each circuit to inquire with the officials and people of the prefectures under their jurisdiction to get suggestions from each unit on possible improvements and remedies for problems, much along the lines of the more general observations he included in this suggestion; he had shown his intimate knowledge of the Suzhou situation earlier, in the 1030s between the first and the second instance of resignation, when he apparently had had a detailed exchange with Chancellor Lü Yijian, of all people, on his suggestions for the water management of this area.⁴⁵⁶ A local official would be selected to calculate the cost of the suggested measures in terms of material and manpower, and then each year in the second month

⁴⁵⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3439.

⁴⁵⁶ This is suggested by the beginning of the report by Fan, which states that it is a response to an inquiry coming from the chancellor. 上呂相公并呈中丞諮目. QSW. vol. 18, j. 382, p. 313-315. James T.C. Liu interprets this and other sources as showing Lü Yijian’s admiration for Fan’s accomplishments in this area. Liu, “An Early Sung Reformer.” p. 116.

labor service would be called up for half a month to work on these projects, reporting the achievements and accomplishments to the center. He asserted that over several years, the accumulated effect of these projects would increase agricultural production, for the benefit of both the state's finances and the people. Similarly, in order to educate the people, a scholar should be selected to discuss the ancient system, and compile techniques that were easy to implement; this compilation would then be distributed to the financial commissioners, and personally bestowed on newly appointed prefects and magistrates.⁴⁵⁷ On one hand the impact of this measure is not small, especially given that it would increase the corvée labor service that according to the text had not been levied for several years in certain areas, which had caused the problems with the infrastructure in the first place; this was supposed to provide the manpower needed for the projects. On the other hand, however, this measure did not propose a one-fit-all agricultural reform scheme for the whole country, it merely provided the institutional set-up to encourage and support improvements of public works on the local level, schemes that presumably could very much vary according to the needs and situation on the ground, and only by virtue of the examples given were limited to dams and canals. Equally noteworthy is the fact that this proposal very much depended on the success of the measure that was supposed to control local administration, since the financial commissioners had a pivotal role to play here; given the problems with that measure, it is not surprising that there is no record of the implementation of measure VI, despite the claim of the *Changbian* that everything but measure VII had been promulgated.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ For the entire suggestion, see: CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3439-4341.

⁴⁵⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444. The comments make clear, however, that for VI, VII, IX, and X we have no record of implementation.

It is precisely the fact that it appeared to have been dropped almost immediately that makes the last measure [VII] ‘restore military preparedness’ (*xiu wubei* 修武備) the most interesting case for discussion about the hierarchy of importance among the measures and issues, and also the degree to which the ‘good men’ agreed or disagreed about the reforms. After offering the usual criticism that the professional army of the Song Dynasty was an expensive and ineffective drain on the state coffers, a danger to social and fiscal stability, and merely raising soldiers of bad quality, Fan Zhongyan suggests that the ‘two administrations’ secretly discuss the situation of the units stationed in the capital, and should there be a shortage, making the establishment of army[-units] necessary, he asks that this be done in a way approximating the Tang *fubing*, a form of militia service provided by the farming population. Having the new recruits engage with farming for three seasons, and with training for one, this scheme would help to save expenses, and after successful implementation in the capital could be gradually extended to the whole country.⁴⁵⁹ In many ways, this is the weakest and most careful of the proposals, since Fan Zhongyan at the bottom line merely suggests that the administrative body discuss the issue, and offers his own opinion on how the matter could be resolved. It therefore is no wonder that this was never implemented, allegedly because the “high ministers” all assumed that it was impossible, and thus it was stopped.⁴⁶⁰ There is no indication here who those people were, and what arguments they used against the measure, but we do have a memorial of uncertain date in which Yu Jing, a censor and associate of the ‘good men’, expresses his conviction that a reintroduction of the *fubing* and restoration of the walls of the capital would be a hardship and source of fear for the

⁴⁵⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3441.

⁴⁶⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3444.

people, without much benefit in the current situation.⁴⁶¹ On the other hand the associate Su Shunqin in an undated memorial in much detail recounts the origins and praises the successful history of the *fubing*, while at the same time warning that it would lead to difficulties if one were to reintroduce militia elements to the army in a piecemeal fashion (as Fan Zhongyan suggested), especially if one against prior assurances increased their duties, to the point where they were treated like professional, tattooed soldiers; if one wanted to revive the *fubing*, the whole system should be reintroduced as a separate institution, and the demands, especially timewise, on the militiamen be made explicit and dependable.⁴⁶² That *fubing* continued to figure largely in Fan Zhongyan's own practical plans is attested to by the fact that in one memorial in which he offered his resignation (1/1044), he suggested in passing that he be sent to border provinces to set up militia units.⁴⁶³ In other words, even among the 'good men' this proposal was controversial, too radical to some, and not radical enough to others, adding weight to the observation that questions of military administration in general, and this proposal in particular, did not belong to the shared, essential political goals of this association.

This discussion of the separate measures allows us to draw two conclusions about them as a program: firstly, all of the measures attempted to make good on the promise to provide practical solutions to the problems of the current times, and abstain from producing empty words, as had been the case for so many other official proclamations in their opinion. From the grand, empire-

⁴⁶¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 149, p. 3603-3604. Dated to 4/1044 because that is when the suggestion regarding the city wall is recorded, the comment by the compiler muses about the fact that the *fubing* suggestion supposedly had been axed from the start; given the ongoing discussion this seems to be doubtful.

⁴⁶² 復府兵論. QSW. vol. 41, j. 878, p.77-79. The Xi Xia wars mentioned would suggest that dating it to *qingli* would be possible.

⁴⁶³ CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3529.

wide measures concerning officialdom, the call for making orders binding, to the more limited agricultural measures, all were based on arguments and observations made before the promulgation of the program, by several officials, including some not belonging to the ‘good men’. From this perspective we see that this reform program very much was a group effort, and had the potential to be a common denominator for the group of ‘good men’ and beyond; it was not just borne by Fan Zhongyan’s own ideas. Otherwise, practicality and practicability was paramount, a goal that is hardly surprising, given the accusations that had accompanied Fan Zhongyan for the most part of his career, of merely seeking fame without actually being able or concerned to put their proposals into practice.

Secondly, the fact that Fan Zhongyan tried to abstain from making unfounded suggestions, and adjusted the scope of his proposals accordingly, at the same time also underscores the hierarchy among them, and the differing degrees to which they were shared by the other associates: the majority [I-IV] dealt with institutionalizing a way to select the right people on all levels of local and central administration, and even tried to incorporate a candidate’s reputation into the process, in the form of recommendations and personal guarantees, measures that would have a profound impact on how officialdom functioned henceforth, and directly addressed problems that they had pointed out time and again. One measure [V] provided the means for the good officials to remain upright. These, together with other measures [IX, X] were supposed to improve the institutional system and make sure that the mechanics of edicts and orders worked as it should, also something that had been heard before. Two measures [VI, VIII] brought some relief to the people and the budget, but again in a way that focused on an institutional solution that was situational, and thus a limited one; these measures mainly created or improved an institutional

framework and refrained from stipulating an exact, one-fits-all content of the measure [VI], always careful to assess the impact before taking the next step; only over time and in accumulation would these proposals have a nationwide impact. This is especially interesting when comparing these regulations to the agricultural loans act and other reforms suggested by Wang Anshi, which from the outset had a much broader scope and a much more concrete, and contested, content. Especially measure VI, with its concrete observations about certain local problems, and the suggested empire-wide solution that provided a framework to address these problems, while allowing for local and situational variation, speaks to a different conceptualization of how government worked; again we see that the definition of government activism (*youwei*) proposed by Fan Zhongyan was not the same as what Wang Anshi would suggest. The single measure that concerned the military [VII] met with criticism from among the ‘good men’ themselves, and was quickly dropped. This analysis of the program therefore underlines the secondary role of the finances and the military that we already have seen in the *Benlun*, instead the whole program is focused on getting the right people, ‘good men’, especially for the financial commissioner cum inspector positions. While all measures were grounded in real observations and criticism made on separate occasions before, this hierarchy of importance within them also underlines the argument made above that the form and comprehensiveness of this program might have been less a product of a deeper belief in such unified proposals of the authors, and instead was very much influenced by the demands of the situation it was proposed in, specifically those that the emperor made for a program that would satisfy his ritual-formal requirements, requirements that are hinted at in the account of the proclamation of the program, when the emperor “put the task of heavenly peace before them,” and thus pointed the way towards a grand, coherent solution. At no point were any of these secondary measures deemed

important enough to be filled with the same normative meaning that Wang Anshi had attached to the Green Sprouts and other measures.

However, the secondary importance that finances and the military were relegated to was not a position shared by all ‘good men’ either, as the two letters by Li Gou dated 6/1044 show that were mentioned in passing above; based on his writing on financial and military matters, Li had strong credentials as theorist of reform in these areas, and accordingly has been seen as a “forerunner of Wang Anshi.”⁴⁶⁴ In the first letter to Fan Zhongyan, Li Gou expressed his hopes and worries about the fact that Fan now was in a position to implement his ideas:⁴⁶⁵ while he now had the chance to bring about success for the empire, this was also an occasion for losing the reputation that he had made for himself among literati in the realm in view of the sizable task ahead. Maybe it was time to look for examples other than the Way of the sage kings, and instead acknowledge what Guan Zhong and Shang Yang had accomplished in their times, historical figures which due to their legalist approach to government usually were not considered good examples by Confucians. In fact, according to Li Gou the area of ‘food and commodities’, that is, the finances and the economy, was the most pressing issue of the day, but he had not heard of any austerity programs so far that would address it. Li Gou goes on to suggest how the emperor could start to alleviate the financial problems by being more frugal in his personal, ritual, and religious expenses, not just bringing relief to the finances, but also changing the customs of the

⁴⁶⁴ As Balasz has called him: Étienne Balasz, “A Forerunner of Wang An-shih,” in: Étienne Balasz, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy. Variations on a Theme*. Translated by H.M. Wright; edited by Arthur F. Wright. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964. p. 277-289.

⁴⁶⁵ 寄上范参政書. QSW. vol. 42, j. 894, p. 1-3.

day in this way. The letter to Fu Bi, on the other hand, is written from his perspective as southerner, and so first describes the economic and general importance of Jiangnan, asserting that contrary to what one says the people in the area are capable of military valor. Li talks at length about the advantages of the archer-militia (*gongshou* 弓手), and how the regular army does not match up to them. However, given that recruitment of professional soldiers had been going on for such a long time, it really was impossible to stop that entirely, although one could still alleviate most of its problems with smaller, more limited measures, such as clearing the ranks of those who are unfit for duty, and improving the leadership.⁴⁶⁶ The point in both cases was that the core reform proponents, Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi, did not do enough to remedy the immediate, practical problems that concerned the finances and the military, and in this way Li Gou supports our argument that these were indeed secondary issues for the core reformers. At the same time as criticizing the reforms in the letters, Li Gou also handed in a supportive essay, and reminded the addressees that he was still in need of a position; from this perspective it would almost seem that Li Gou was taking a leaf out of Fan Zhongyan's own book, who had also criticized his patron. It is possible that this kind of display had become its own trope, however, given the ideas that Li Gou had circulated in his programmatic essays, it is also plausible that he actually was dissatisfied with the limited goals of the 'Ten-Point Program' regarding these issues. In fact, some 'good men' would express even more fundamental criticism of the reform measures: the long-time supporter Su Shunqin, whose memorials have been discussed before, offered a scathing critique of Fan Zhongyan and the program, purporting to report to Fan what the people on the streets said, he all but accused him of having gone over to the dark side of those who followed the old routine, and being too coward to make the bold proposals that would

⁴⁶⁶ 寄上富樞密書. QSW. vol. 42, j. 894, p. 3-6.

be necessary.⁴⁶⁷ Su notes that the suggestions made so far cannot in fact be the far-reaching reforms needed in this situation, and calls on Fan Zhongyan to heed the suggestions of the public (*zhongyi* 眾議), which he himself furnishes. For Su, Fan Zhongyan's reputation for success, and his utmost sincerity (*cheng* 誠) was an asset affecting the people, but easily lost if he did not follow it up with decisive action.⁴⁶⁸ We see how contested the program was even among nominal supporters of the *qingli* reforms, both Su and Li Gou pointed to the need for the reforms to make an immediate, far-reaching impact so that they would not lose their momentum and give detractors an opportunity to denounce them. Li specifically cautioned that the 'good men' might lose the support among officials, and possibly the emperor, if they were too concerned with normative demands, and did not do enough about the practical, legalistic side of politics. And they had a point, not just regarding the two areas of the finances and the military: even what we have identified as the core proposals, I-IV, in fact was further limited by the timeframe of the institutions of promotion and examination: the last civil-service exam had been administered in 1042, so the measure regarding it [III] would only have had an effect after a few years, at the time of the next civil-service examination, which took place in 1046; by that time the policies had been rescinded.⁴⁶⁹ Likewise, the measures regarding the official promotion review, due to the proposed cycle of 3 or 5 years, for the most part would only over the long term have an impact, although it was possible to speed promotions of outstanding talents under this system. What remained were only the stipulations curtailing the *yin*-privilege, the establishment of

⁴⁶⁷ 上范公參政書. QSW. vol. 41, j. 877, p. 53-55; suggestions: p. 55-61.

⁴⁶⁸ QSW. vol. 41, j. 877, p. 53.

⁴⁶⁹ *Song Huiyao* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 選舉一/貢舉一/仁宗/慶曆六年. p. 選舉一之一〇. Rescinding the changes: CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3761.

schools, the land surveys necessitated by the planned overhaul of the official land, and the financial commissioners cum inspectors who would be carefully selected and sent to the provinces to oversee local administration. From this perspective, the *qingli* reform was not very radical and swift, and certainly not fulfilling the hopes of far-reaching, systematic reform that these more radical supporters had had.

The centrality of the financial commissioners in particular even finds some echo in the form it was promulgated: the program in general had orchestrated quotes from the classics and historical precedents in a way that made the connection between idealized antiquity and the proposal appear to be distant and indirect; the corresponding edicts, when not just containing the technical stipulations, introduced the measures with a reference to antiquity to outline the general issue, without, however, saying that the new institution *was* the same as in antiquity, which, in case of the Tang *fubing*, as well as some other measures, would be difficult anyway. For the most part the good men were drawing their examples and references from the full range of Chinese history, not just the antiquity that they favored. The fact that they shied away from making too strong an argument becomes even more apparent when considering the exception to this rule, the following passage of the memorial that Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi made in support of the inspector measure:

The ancients in the capital established high ministers and officials to aid the Son of Heaven in overseeing the government of the realm, and in the provinces they established ‘peaks and shepherds’ (that is, a kind of territorial officials), provincial governors, district chiefs, observing and investigating envoys, to lead the feudal lords, and the local administrators, in order to differentiate and manage them. Within and outside of the capital for all [positions] one got the right people, there was no such thing as the realm not being administrated in the grandest fashion. The financial commissioners and inspectors of today *are* (ye) the offices of the ancient ‘peaks and shepherds’, provincial governor, district chief, observing and investigating envoy; the magistrates *are* the appointments of feudal lord and local administrator of old.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3480-3481.

At that time, in 10/1043 the local inspectors were the first measure of the program to be introduced by the government, possibly due to the fact that it had been discussed and, in fact, decreed before, in a way that left a lot to be desired from the perspective of the ‘good men’, as Ouyang Xiu had reiterated once again in a memorial dated to 9/1043.⁴⁷¹ However, even now the implementation seems to have been very limited, for we learn that only three inspectors, Wang Su among them, had been selected and appointed in response to the memorial; there is no indication here that the full number was hand picked at this point that would have been necessary to inspect the realm in its entirety.⁴⁷² No sources could be located that would explain the difference between this memorial and the other, more indirect arguments made in virtually all the other reform proposals, memorials, and edicts, and one can only speculate about a possible learning curve that had taken place between this text and the ‘discussion’ and memorial on the examination reforms, where a more consensual approach was taken; on the other hand this measure had been in place for some time now, which would explain an increased sense of urgency on the part of the good men to get the desired results. We should also remind ourselves that this was the measure that caused considerable problems for the good men, problems that will be discussed in more detail below. Be that as it may, it seems to me that this exception to the rule highlights the fact that the different form of the argument in the other texts is not coincidental, and constitutes a conscious choice on the part of the respective authors, maybe reflecting general doubts about the possibility of returning to antiquity, but possibly also indicating a desire to

⁴⁷¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3464-3467. The compiler states that this is undated, though. In 2/1044, Ouyang Xiu attacked two commissioners cum inspectors that failed in their inspection duties as stipulated by the earlier edict of 5/1043, and had them dismissed. CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3539-3540.

⁴⁷² CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3480. However, later Ouyang Xiu would point to a selection process having taken place in the *Liang fu* (CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3690).

placate certain groups at court, and avoid the impression of being too radical and only following their own ideas.⁴⁷³

This goes well together with an almost constant theme in the sources that emphasizes how in particular Fan Zhongyan refrained from making too radical demands, and did not expect fast results, something that started already in early 1043, with the reason that Fan Zhongyan gave for not supporting the recommendation of Shi Jie for a censorial position:

The uprightness of Shi Jie is famous all under heaven, but it is also his character to be fond of the unorthodox, if one promotes him to become a censor, he surely will demand things from the ruler that are hard to implement, and it also quite certainly will be the case that if a measure goes a little against his intention, then he will draw on [all the] historic precedents for forms of remonstrance, down to kowtowing until blood is drawn, there will be nothing that he will not do [to get his will]. While the emperor is advanced in age, there is no loss of his virtuous charisma; he [is able to] reform the court and government affairs on his own terms, why would one use a censor like that?⁴⁷⁴

As we have seen, Fan is said to have urged caution already in the run-up to the proclamation of the program, when he emphasized that reforming the evils of the world would be a long process;⁴⁷⁵ moreover, many of the core suggestions regarding the civil service contained stipulations that were supposed to soften the blow, such as in measure I, which did not abolish automatic promotion entirely, instead merely limiting it to lower court ranks and extending the interval; measure II did not do away with the *yin*-privilege either, merely trying to make sure that it was much more limited, and that when it was exercised, the candidates would meet certain

⁴⁷³ Lamouroux contrasts the focus on (recent) history that he detected among influential officials at the early Renzong court with Fan's penchant for idealized antiquity, but this highlights the fact even more that most of the arguments for the reform referred to both history and antiquity, and thus to some degree presented an epistemological compromise. Lamouroux, "Song Renzong's Court Landscape." p. 79. It is one of the key points in Bol's argument about Wang Anshi and Sima Guang that the fact that they have no political common ground is intricately connected to their diametrically opposed intellectual approaches. Bol, "Government, Society, and State." p. 185-186. See also more detailed exposition of their different world views earlier.

⁴⁷⁴ *Fan Wenzheng gong ji. yishilu juan* 遺事錄卷, p. 6.

⁴⁷⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3431.

standards; measure III allowed candidates who had participated multiple times in the exams some leeway; Fan Zhongyan here explicitly goes against a demand made by Ouyang Xiu, of applying the strict rules across the board, expressing his fear that this radical approach would alienate those of the old guard who were unable to meet the new standards.⁴⁷⁶ Measure VII at the end of the day only called for a discussion of the issue, and was dropped when the desired outcome of that discussion was out of reach. There is a much cited anecdote according to which Fan Zhongyan supposedly prevented Fu Bi from outright demanding somebody's execution, urging him to remember what would happen if the tables were turned on them again, which the latter supposedly remembered when the 'good men' had come under fire themselves.⁴⁷⁷ While especially Ouyang Xiu conducted several ad-hominem attacks, particularly on Lü Yijian, his family and alleged allies such as Li Shu, as well as some lower ranked officials, the standard phrase when criticizing an issue was 'ministers in power', usually without naming names; from this perspective, attacking the retired Lü Yijian could have been akin to burning a straw man, criticizing someone who did not play an important institutional role any more for its public effect, and in order to take away any lingering influence that he might still have, while being more lenient to those who did have official positions in the chancellery, at least until Yu Jing starts to name names in 3/1044; citing suggestions made by Jia Changchao in the program, and the order to discuss measure III in the chancellery, and thereby include other officials in the reform process, could be considered attempts to draw in officials who were not strict adherents of the ideas of the 'good men'. While some of these instances of moderation might have been put on display after the defeat of the 'good men' to improve the image of Fan and fend off accusations

⁴⁷⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3436.

⁴⁷⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3499.

of having been too radical, putting the blame for that on certain figures among his associates, the consistency of the theme and the diversity of the sources makes it hard to imagine a complete invention. Therefore, in my view these anecdotes in a general way still speak to Fan's attempts to navigate the tense political landscape that he was acting in, where he was caught between the resentment of the old guard, the expectations of the emperor, and the demands of the radical elements among his own associates, who wanted much more than he deemed feasible at the moment. We should, however, remind ourselves that according to the *Benlun* the finances and the military would eventually be on the agenda, *after* the precondition of promoting the right, 'good men' had been met. Likewise, institutions were not irrelevant either, and it was expected that a 'good' official would be able to talk about practical institutional solutions when called on to do so. However, contrary to Smith I would argue that neither institutional reforms nor institutional hegemony over the court was the core reformer's sole focus and priority under these circumstances, when despite all public displays they could not be certain of the continued support of the emperor.⁴⁷⁸ Instead, the institutions they proposed were one of the possible means to their end of promoting and getting the right men; obtaining the emperor's unwavering recognition and support for such men was equally, if not more important for that task.

At the same time it is equally true to say that, despite all attempts to tone down the impact of their demands, the central parts I-IV of Fan Zhongyan's program at their heart still aimed at a profound reform of officialdom at every level of administration and at every stage in official careers, from recruitment and local administrators to high-level officials and their right to

⁴⁷⁸ Smith offers five criteria to capture the difference between Fan's and Wang Anshi's reform effort, and argues that Wang Anshi was more successful in all five of them. Specifically he shows that the reformers never gained a substantial presence in important government offices. Smith, "Anatomies of Reform." p. 17, 18, 37-38, figure 4.

recommend their sons. Over the long term this would have had a far-reaching impact, and it could be argued to have very immediately served the goal of their ‘faction of good men’: the way the program aimed at institutionalizing the selection and promotion of officials would make sure that their view of how to be a ‘good man’, a good official, would get preferential treatment; their way of thinking, writing, and arguing, of forming associations, by seeking a reputation for oneself and providing one for others would be the preferred avenue to get ahead; in the local examinations, or in their local schools, candidates would be known by their name, and much like Fan Zhongyan being patronized by Yan Shu, this would give local officials the opportunity to scrutinize a candidate’s ethical ‘conduct’, or allegiance before recommending him; which of the two it would be depended on one’s point of view. The new emphasis on essay and policy question would ensure that literati who, much like the ‘good men’, knew how to argue their case from the classics and from precedents would be selected first, before the poetic talent of candidates would even be considered. The new rules for promotions, for filling local posts and for the *yin*-privilege would ensure that no candidate would get ahead out of sequence who had no network of public supporters who would be willing to take a risk for their associates and peg their careers to that of the official they recommended, a network that was very similar to what we have seen the ‘good men’ do in a more informal way, when several of them came out in public support of Fan Zhongyan, and were dismissed accordingly; preselecting officials that were allowed to recommend candidates for posts would ensure that only ‘good men’, that is, literati who were their actual or potential associates, would be used to select the candidates. In summary, these measures contained deep changes that officialdom would have undergone in the long run had they had their way, for once belittling the moniker ‘minor reform’ for their project. Officials would have had the choice of taking part in this system, or face the consequences of delayed

promotions and increasing marginalization. For literati who did not share the ‘good men’s’ opinion about the desirability of the predominance of them and their kind, and who perceived them as more monolithic than they were, it must indeed have looked as if they tried to implement their own selfish, factional agenda in this way. However, it must be emphasized again that this support for their ‘kind’ did not amount to a demand to have the same ideology, it was more *how* they acted, discussed, and thought, rather than *what*, that should be the common denominator.

In fact this central goal of the agenda can be legitimately described from a perspective of social change, a description that falls in line with observations made by James T.C. Liu, Peter Bol, or Paul Smith:⁴⁷⁹ relatively speaking, lowly and originally not very well-connected officials made up the core of actors in *qingli*; they had seen that they and other ‘good men’ did not get ahead in their careers, and were not used in the way that their talents warranted. Therefore, they started to point out the unfairness of a system where on the one hand promotion was automatic and regular, and on the other Lü Yijian could give positions to his cronies, and tried to secure positions for themselves and their likes by arguing for more meritocracy. The core measures in particular would have served to shake up and break up an established, comfortable, glacial official system that from their perspective was geared towards securing the interests of the talentless haves, and keep the talented have-nots at bay. Rather than not forming associations at all, they formed associations and propagated a recommendation system where these relationships would be under public scrutiny and control at all times, to ensure that the recommenders could not recommend

⁴⁷⁹ Liu, “An Early Sung Reformer.” p. 126-7. Peter Bol, “The Song Context.” p. 26-27. Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 349. “Anatomies of Reform.” p. 3-4, 11.

people at will, and without making sure that they would live up to expectations.⁴⁸⁰ At the same time, even in the early stages of their careers these overblown normative arguments made them famous, and in and by themselves helped to solve the immediate problem for them. Yet, this socio-economic explanation goes only so far, given the fact that sons of established families, such as Han Qi, flocked to the cause as well,⁴⁸¹ but this phenomenon became more widespread in the period after *qingli*, when the sons of officials that the ‘good men’ had attacked sought their acquaintance, such as Lü Gongzhu and the Han brothers.⁴⁸² This serves to show that the normative idea espoused by the ‘good men’ as such had the potential to attract literati of all levels, even sons of enemies.

The other qualification for this explanation of their normative demands through social change goes back to what we have seen going on between Fan Zhongyan and Yan Shu in the early days of the former’s career, for it shows that they also attached themselves in many ways to the same kind of established officials they criticized as a group. Put differently, once again, being moral was one aspect, but adhering to social ritual was another, separate one, and one not guided exclusively by ethical considerations. Even from the perspective of social mobility, a strategy of sincerity *and* ritual made sense, since, for example, a complete break with Yan Shu, or an attempt to extend the normative hyperbole into every little social interaction, that is, making their

⁴⁸⁰ James T.C. Liu argues that this part of the reforms aimed at creating a “recognized, legitimate bond” between officials, and likens it to a parliamentary democracy, albeit with “some stretch of imagination” (Liu, “An Early Sung Reformer.” p. 121).

⁴⁸¹ Liu, “An Early Sung Reformer.” p. 127. He describes that Han Qi bought into the normative framework despite his background.

⁴⁸² Lü Gongzhu’s case has been discussed above; Han Wei and Han Jiang’s father Han Yi, among others, was attacked by Han Qi in 1038, leading or contributing to his ouster (CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2862).

social circle exclusive rather than inclusive, would severely limit their chances of getting ahead. In practical terms it did not pay in the long run to aim for exclusive and limited affiliations in their friendships, marriages, and other social contacts beyond a very general ‘as promising as possible’, or to demand ideological coherence beyond what we have described as the shared ideals of the ‘good men’, because the changing fortunes of office holding and vagaries of time meant that every contact could be the one that helped their members to bring or keep reputation and office.⁴⁸³

In fact, the ‘good men’ themselves pointed in the direction of a social explanation for their actions along these lines: we have seen that Ouyang Xiu at times was quite openly admitting to Yan Shu that he and the others wanted to get ahead, although in their political proclamations the emphasis was of course on the benefit for the commonwealth that such promotion of ‘good men’ would have. Moreover, Ouyang Xiu already on occasion of the proclamation of the program had warned that there would be lesser people trying to preserve their privileges and attack the reformers, and urged the emperor to be steadfast. At their downfall, the part of their program concerning the civil service was also given as the main reason for officials to slander the reformers, because it ran against their and their families’ vested interests;⁴⁸⁴ for this group of officials, the official system that the ‘good men’ described and criticized worked very well, if it indeed provided automatic promotions for them and positions and salaries for most, if not all of their relatives. On the other hand, it also was convenient for the reformers to be able to point to

⁴⁸³ For this point I have greatly profited from Beverly Bossler’s description of marriage strategies in Song, which were both inclusive and exclusive at the same time, precisely because that was the best strategy in the given social environment. Bossler, *Powerful Relations*. p. 85-87.

⁴⁸⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3637.

evil elements as an explanation for their downfall, and it is somewhat suspicious that Ouyang Xiu was rather quick to almost predict this outcome, at a time when the reforms had not been implemented yet. While some involvement by disgruntled officials in their failure is certainly likely, in the following, last chapter of this part therefore a somewhat different analysis of their fall from grace will be offered.

Chapter 6. Getting past the damning term ‘faction’: the role of the emperor in the good men’s political defeat

In early 1044, the political position of the ‘good men’ still presented itself as ambiguous, at least judging by the record: on one hand stood their success of having the emperor openly endorse them, publishing the program, and of having the central measures I-IV promulgated as edicts, the last one [III 3/1044] even receiving support from a number of officials who were no ideological allies of theirs. They also dominated the public sphere with their memorials and attacks, while the imperial edicts about the reforms to a large degree represented their ideas as well. As far as could be ascertained, there was no public memorial against them by any of the other important officials, and even more secretive attacks on Fan Zhongyan and company are only recorded for later times.

On the other hand, the long-standing problem that they appeared to be shut out from the negotiations with the Xi Xia continued, and their suggestions on particulars regarding the peace accord supposedly were still ignored; despite the fact that censors nominally had been granted access to the court sessions of the inner circle since 8/1043, in 11/1043 Ouyang Xiu still tried to

instruct the emperor on what to ask in his discussions about the peace, so as to get the ‘right’ answers and a good decision, much as if he was not present at these deliberations.⁴⁸⁵ As late as 2/1044, when the negotiations had been concluded, Ouyang Xiu claimed that all his suggestions about the peace accord had been ignored, and that nobody among the literati in the realm or the officials at court had assisted him;⁴⁸⁶ this seems a bit hyperbolic in view of the fact that the ‘good men’ had argued against the accord all along, but still cannot be dismissed completely. Likewise, in 3/1044, shortly after the proclamation of measure III, Yu Jing still felt it necessary to reiterate the reasons for reform and the need to select officials and generals carefully, for the first time singling out the sitting chancellors Zhang Dexiang and Yan Shu as being unable to follow through with the reform; Yu Jing also once again emphasized that orders needed to be binding, and personnel decisions should come directly from the emperor, and not from high ministers. Most importantly, however, he called on the ruler to give up his impartiality and incline towards the side of the wise men joining forces for the common good.⁴⁸⁷ Their polemic arguments certainly overstated the case, but it is credible that even now the ‘good men’ saw their project in danger of losing its momentum and being bogged down by the old problems and the old elites, and not without reason. We also should remind ourselves of the criticism offered by Li Gou and Su Shunqin, who thought that even those measures that had been proclaimed were not going far

⁴⁸⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3508-3510.

⁴⁸⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3537-3538. Note that due to events unfolding between the Xi Xia and the Liao in 5/1044, the finished peace accord was not put into effect until late 1044. Dunnell, *Tanguts*, p. 129. In 8/1044, Fan Zhongyan would submit a memorial arguing *for* the peace accord, however, stating that now that the enemy was willing to accept the deferential nomenclature, and in a situation where they seemed to have joined forces, it was more beneficial to be more lenient with regard to the other terms; historically, powerful emperors have accepted peace to ease the burden on the people, and now one should do the same and not seek lands that were useless for the state. In this way, one would be able to reduce the military and regain one’s financial strength, to be prepared for future challenges posed by the ‘barbarians’ (CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3692).

⁴⁸⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 147, p. 3568-3569.

enough, and feared that without countable successes the reforms would soon fail. Most importantly, however, there is no indication whatsoever that the emperor ever had been convinced by their arguments against a peace accord with the Western enemy, or for permanently taking the side of the ‘good men’; it would seem that after his one-off endorsement of the ‘good men’ and their program, Renzong had reverted to his earlier noncommittal, ambiguous attitude, an attitude that apparently for some time shielded Fan Zhongyan and his associates from overt attacks, but at the same time did not render any further assistance to the task of getting rid of ‘bad men’ and fostering ‘good men’, including themselves. Given their ambitious goals, this was not a satisfying situation to be in for the reformers.

From this perspective, and in view of what has been said above about how essential the previous public endorsement of the emperor had been, the event in 4/1044 that would herald their downfall, the famous question of the emperor about the existence of ‘good’ factions, acquires a new significance for the reforms themselves, and especially for their core tenet, namely to clearly differentiate between ‘good and bad’ officials in every personnel decision, and on every level of government. Note, however, that this was only the beginning of the end of the ‘good men’s’ hold on public positions of power and influence; the last reform measure that would be implemented, the politically neutral measure VIII about abolishing some counties in Henanfu, was decreed in 5/1044. It would take until 3–4/1045 until the last ‘good men’ Han Qi and Yu Jing resigned, and only then would the most important reforms be rescinded or rendered ineffective by changing core elements.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ Han Qi resigns (3/1045): CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3759. Yu Jing (4/1045): CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3772. An edict forbade students from other localities from being instructed in local schools; in passing it talks about local officials wanting to get credit for building a school, without there being much substance to it: CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3760;

The decisive events unfolded when in 4/1044, the emperor asked the following question:

The emperor said to the close ministers: in the past, it was more the lesser men who formed factions, but are there also factions of ‘good men’? Fan Zhongyan said in reply: when I was at the border, I saw people who were fond of fighting form a faction between themselves, and those who were too cowardly to fight also formed a faction among themselves; the same is also true for the factions of the evil and the upright at court, it only depends on Your Majesty’s determination (*xin* 心) to investigate [the nature of a faction], nothing else. If a faction is formed and they do good things, what harm is there for the state?⁴⁸⁹

In other words, yes there were good factions, but it was up to the emperor to decide which group was evil and which was good. Given everything that Fan Zhongyan and others had said and done earlier, including the public displays of support for each other, and the endorsement of the emperor for them *as a group*, the implication could not have been much clearer. In support, Ouyang Xiu handed in his famous memorial ‘On Factions’, which will be discussed shortly; its record in the *Changbian* is followed by the allegation that the ‘good men’s’ enemies instigated a eunuch to secretly inform the emperor against Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu, Yin Zhu, and Yu Jing, citing the now famous poem by Cai Xiang, and how that led to his inclusion in their ‘faction’; the eunuch also warned that, given that the private entourage of an official was about ten men, these five or six people together might have a followership of 50 to 60 literati, and if allowed to do so would fill the important positions in the realm within two or three years’ time. “Who would dare to speak up”, he asks pointedly, and how would one stop them from dominating everything?⁴⁹⁰ The entry tries to create the impression that Xia Song, still smarting

Returning to the old set-up of first examining poetry in the *jinshi*, and significance of the classics in *zhuke*-exams: CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3761. Abolishing the new examination for candidates coming in on the *yin*-privilege: CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3762 (Fan’s suggestion is being defended by Bao Zheng in the following memorial, all 3/1045). Inspectors lose their right to conduct investigations on their own (*zhuan xing* 專行), and are to report to the censorate (4/1045): CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3772. According to an earlier stipulation (3/1045), they also are not supposed to dispatch officials to investigate any more, to prevent them from stirring up a fuss (p. 3760).

⁴⁸⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3580.

⁴⁹⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3582. Note that the commentary draws the date of the anecdote into question.

from his ouster and the accusations of Shi Jie's poem, unnamed bad elements, and a eunuch were somehow connected to this incident, which might or might not have been the case. It is curious that the line of defense followed here in the sources is to admit to a close relationship between the actors as the reason for them being united in their words and deeds, and thus acknowledge a degree of political imprudence; yet, otherwise one puts the blame on evil officials; note that this largely follows the line of argument that Ouyang Xiu would fully develop later, when he ceased to use the incriminating word 'faction' in the description of his association, and instead described it as a tool for evil people, to be used to get rid of the 'good men'. It is this contrast between Fan's and Ouyang Xiu's attempt to give the term a positive spin, and the later memorials that claim that it was merely a tool for political attacks, without much factual grounding, which caused commentators such as James T.C. Liu to consider this an isolated incident; it just seemed too much of a leap given the negative connotation that the term 'faction' supposedly had hitherto had, and would continue to have. Inspired by a remark by Ye Shi, Liu surmised that Ouyang Xiu in his desperation had acted like a lawyer, defending something bad his friend had said without really believing it.⁴⁹¹ However, as we have seen, Fan had made statements about the existence of a 'good' faction early on, and while for the most part the 'good men' only indirectly described themselves as a faction ('if x is a factionalist, then I should be punished too for my association with him') there is ample evidence that it was part of the 'good men's' modus operandi to openly admit to their connection to each other; first and foremost under duress in the dismissals during the 1030s, but also later, when they assured the emperor several times that their members were 'of one heart'. Moreover, the emperor had promoted them as a group, if in a staggered fashion,

⁴⁹¹ Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 56. Ye Shi 葉適, *Xixue jiyán* 習學記言. Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition (electronic version). j. 50.

and allegedly had all but addressed them as a group when calling for their input in 9/1043; therefore the fact that they worked together could hardly come as a surprise to him. It even seems to me that the public unity that they had displayed earlier might have been one reason for the emperor to promote and support them in the first place, given his pursuit of *taiping*.

We will never know the exact background of this exchange, whether this was a question instigated by the entourage of the emperor, the emperor himself, or whether it was Fan Zhongyan who initiated the exchange ‘off the stage’ of what we see in the records. Be that as it may, I do think we can say why Fan Zhongyan replied as he did, stating clearly that indeed there are ‘good’ factions, and for anyone knowing his earlier writing on the topic it would be fairly easy to predict his affirmative reply; moreover, a denial could have been used just as easily against him, in view of his earlier statements along the same lines. It is true that all previous indications pointed towards the political danger that such a statement would carry with it; at several times the emperor either had shown his displeasure at what appeared to be factional strife at court, followed by resignations, or outright banned all ‘factional activities’, accusations that in fact were not at all exclusively targeted at the ‘good men’, and usually were linked to a dispute among officials.⁴⁹² It would seem that accusations of factionalism were also used by the emperor to keep his high officials in check. And yet, in view of their continued ambiguous position, and the importance they ascribed to esteeming *ming*, reputation, or more directly ‘the name’ that one has made, in Ouyang Xiu’s and the other reformer’s understanding of the mechanism how a sage

⁴⁹² Lü Yijian’s own resignation in the course of an argument with Wang Zeng, together with one alleged associate, respectively, in 4/1037 (CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2826-27). Order forbidding faction (10/1038): CB. vol. 5, j. 122, p. 2881. Kong Daofu is accused of factionalism by the emperor and dismissed, among others, with Pang Ji, and two sons of Lü Yijian (CB. vol. 5, j. 125, p. 2939). Ye Qingchen and Jia Changchao resign over accusations of factionalism in 1041 (CB. vol. 6, j. 132, p. 3127).

influenced society, this was also an opportunity to once and for all gain the explicit imperial recognition for the tenet that we have identified as central to their cause. Such recognition would serve to firmly establish their kind, the ‘good men’, in government administration, with far reaching implications for their program and for themselves. Had the emperor been willing to make such a declaration in favor of ‘good factions’, much like in the case of the events leading to their program, it would have further improved their position, enabled them to continue their public argument, and also provided them with more leverage against their alleged secret enemies, and those literati who still were unconvinced. Theirs would have been a political association by imperial sanction, rather than operating in the current twilight of being semi-acknowledged in fact, but not in ‘name’, as it were. Conversely, to decline to give that recognition also would show that Renzong still did not follow one of the central arguments of the reformers: that it was possible and in fact necessary to at all times make a clear distinction between the good and the bad, especially in high office.⁴⁹³ It fits the sphinx-like public stance that the emperor habitually took that he allegedly greeted the allegations presented by the eunuch with disbelief,⁴⁹⁴ but the fact of the matter was that he also did not consent to what Fan or Ouyang Xiu had said, a signal that could not have gone unnoticed by a court sensitive to such signs, and in fact might have triggered, rather than been caused by, some of the attacks placed in its context by the sources.

In the remainder of this chapter, two texts by Ouyang Xiu describing factions, or his own associations, will bookend our remaining narrative about the downfall of the ‘good men’ over the

⁴⁹³ For example, see Yu Jing’s reiterated demand for the emperor to “lean to one side” shortly before that: CB. vol. 6, j. 147, p. 3568-3569.

⁴⁹⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3582.

following year, but will also allow us to draw further conclusions about the self-perception that the ‘good men’ had. The first one, the famous essay ‘On Factions’, *Pengdang lun* 朋黨論,⁴⁹⁵ is associated closely with the question posed by the emperor mentioned above, and due to its prominence has been translated several times, obviating the need to provide another one here.⁴⁹⁶ The gist of the argument was that indeed factions were a fact of political culture at court, in fact it was a natural principle that good men associated with other good men based on their shared ideals (*tong dao* 同道), and that lesser men associated with lesser men because they had a common interest; however, to Fan Zhongyan’s position he adds the observation that after all, only the ‘good men’ were able to form an enduring bond; the reason for that was that the common interest that motivated the lesser men was merely a transient phenomenon, and as soon as it changed the associates would turn on each other, going so far as disregarding permanent social relationships in their quarrels. “This is not true for ‘good men’, what they observe is the Way and righteousness, what they practice is loyalty and good faith, and what they cherish is reputation and integrity (*ming jie*). They draw on that to cultivate themselves, and therefore have shared ideals and will improve each other, they draw on that to serve the state, and therefore are of one heart and will further the common weal, and from beginning to end they are as one, this is a faction of ‘good men’”.⁴⁹⁷ The most important duty for the ruler then was to get rid of the bad faction and employ the faction of the ‘good men’, as Fan Zhongyan had said. Two observations are of interest in this passage: firstly, the role of cultivating the self in bringing about this unity, underpinning the importance of education in the ‘good men’s’ program; secondly, we again

⁴⁹⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3580-82.

⁴⁹⁶ Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 53-54. de Bary, Bloom, *Sources of Chinese tradition*, Vol. 1. p. 595-596.

⁴⁹⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3581.

encounter the terms *ming* (reputation) and *jie*, the former by now a very familiar occurrence in the good men's arguments, but also the latter, here translated as integrity, appeared several times in the introductory discussion on ritual, where it reminded us of the integrating, regulating function of ritual. Interesting in this respect is how Ouyang Xiu then goes on to describe how 22 officials employed by Shun formed a faction, since "they praised each other, and modestly deferred to each other" appears to refer to ritual acts, more than anything else.⁴⁹⁸ This confirms what after reading the first passage could only be a hunch, namely that for Ouyang there was actually a ritual side to being a faction, aside from the normative aspect of it. It follows a range of historical examples from antiquity to more recent history, examples that underlined Ouyang Xiu's point that successful rulers had not been afraid of letting good people form an encompassing faction as basis for the unity of the empire, whereas attempts at forbidding all factions in Han and Tang had certainly not prevented Han's downfall, and contributed to the end of Tang.

The question here is of course why Ouyang Xiu expanded on Fan Zhongyan's reply; what did he try to achieve when he claimed that these examples could serve as a lesson to Renzong?

Assuming that the earlier observation is correct that the emperor was aspiring to great peace and unity, *taiping*, if largely in a symbolic, performative manner, then Ouyang Xiu here makes the argument that the emperor could only bring about enduring unity if he was willing to fully support the good faction; in fact the mistake so far had been to be narrow minded about this issue, and in his aversion against factions and disunity lumping good and bad people together in blanket edicts banning them. However, despite all his efforts he would not get rid of them and

⁴⁹⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3581.

achieve unity if he continued to avoid taking a stand and ‘leaning to one side’. Moreover, only the good men actually would be able to forge more permanent relationships, and thus unity, because the bad elements were only guided by their own interests, not morality or repeated, ritual praise for each other. Among others, the fate of Lü Yijian in 1037 indeed suggested an aversion of the emperor towards all signs of factionalism at his court, an aversion that can be explained by two somewhat conflicting motives: firstly, the public quarrels disturbed the outward image of peace and harmony that Renzong wanted to give; secondly he considered official and public accumulations of power and influence detrimental to his own standing and position in this harmonic court. To sum up, in this famous exchange, the ‘good men’ once again had made an offer to the emperor, demanding even more explicit, concrete support than at the first instance, and offering elite cohesion and unity in return; however, this time the emperor did not take them up on it.

One problem certainly must have been that it was too obvious by now that the ‘good men’ could not deliver the kind of public, ostentatious unity that the emperor wanted, because from the beginning there had been many public disagreements between them. This had started even before the *qingli* reforms, when Han Qi and others had proposed a plan of attack against the Xi Xia. This plan was considered too bold by Du Yan, and strongly opposed in the discussion that took place in the emperor’s presence, to the point where Du offered his resignation.⁴⁹⁹ In 2/1042 Fan Zhongyan advocated to build up and fortify Shuiluo to strengthen the Song’s hold on this area, but Han Qi opined that this would be too much hardship on labor forces that were already

⁴⁹⁹ (12/1040) CB. vol. 5, j. 129, p. 3062.

stretched thin by other projects.⁵⁰⁰ We have already seen the letters by Li Gou and Su Shunqin, which show that open debate and disagreement was part of the ‘good men’s’ ethos, although it is unlikely that the emperor had read these, even if they had been circulated more widely. Yu Jing’s criticism of the *fubing* measure, also discussed above, served to show that even the program itself was not out of bounds for disputes among the good men.⁵⁰¹ An important source of disagreement between good men were decisions about punishments for mistakes and crimes of others, such as between Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi in 11/1043, as well as Fan and Du Yan.⁵⁰² Shuiluo and other military matters again led to a dispute in 4/1044, involving even more ‘good men’ in the debate.⁵⁰³ Arguably the worst dispute among the associates concerned the question whether or not the Qidan would attack, although that took place after the ‘faction’ incident (6/1044); Fan Zhongyan thought that they would, and fervently pleaded with the court to prepare the defenses, whereas Fu Bi and Du Yan were certain that they would not attack. A heated discussion ensued, with both sides throwing everything in, including the offer to be punished should they be wrong.⁵⁰⁴ While at least Fu Bi’s memorial remained relatively polite, the discussion appears to have been intense, and despite the subsequent assurance in the sources that

⁵⁰⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 135, p. 3223. Record of giving up the project: CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3527.

⁵⁰¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 149, p. 3603-3604.

⁵⁰² CB. vol. 6, j. 145, 3499. Ouyang Xiu recounts later that Du Yan and Fan Zhongyan disagreed over punishing Teng Zongliang (CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3764). There is no record of the disagreement between the two itself, but ample evidence that this case was the topic of protracted debates, which also included the case of Zhang Kang: memorials by Fan on the matter: CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3456-3459; j. 146, p. 3527-30. At the beginning of the matter, Yan Du 燕度 is sent to investigate embezzling of public funds when on a military posting: CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3456 (9/1043). An attack on Teng by Wang Gongchen, specifically excluding Zhang because he is a military man, not a civil (court) official: CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3538 (2/1044); subsequent demotion: p. 3542. Several memorials by Ouyang Xiu on the matter, and a similar case; he argues for caution and leniency, and attacking the investigator, Yan Du, on a different matter: CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3487-3490.

⁵⁰³ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3575-3578; p. 3590-3591; j. 149, p. 3604-3608.

⁵⁰⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3638-39.

they were not holding a grudge against each other after the event, the fact of the matter was that they quite frequently had publicly disagreed with each other, jeopardizing the display of unity at court that Ouyang Xiu promised.

Subsequently, covert and overt signs appeared that the reform's star was sinking: shortly afterwards a number of officials, including Du Yan and Wang Yaochen, were fined for an affair concerning the relocation of a bridge,⁵⁰⁵ something that would not be that remarkable, had it not prompted Fan Zhongyan to start the memorial about the details with the following observation:

I previously, together with Zhang Dexiang, have been bestowed with a virtuous uttering [by Your Majesty] in person, saying 'that the closest and most intimate officials of your entourage, for fear of Your Majesty, were unable to take a stand, and did not dare to talk about matters with all their heart; from today onwards it will not do to distort matters and create an outward appearance, so as to avoid being implicated in a faction; pointed discussions are absolutely necessary, there cannot be any doubt.' We were presented with an opportunity that comes only once in a thousand years, having received your sagely remarks about this, we could not help but rejoice at the auspicious occasion. I day and night worked tirelessly, wishing to exert my mind, in order to live up to Your Majesty's expectation of suggestions befitting a prime minister, and although I had to incur towering rage, how could I dare to dodge [my responsibility]? Today I humbly observe that within the memorial by the [court] for review of sentences, and court of judicial review that adjudicated the malfeasance in office of Wang Yaochen and his subordinates, there are some points that do not square with common sense, and where the sentence is not quite appropriate. If one were to simply promulgate it in an edict, then I fear that outside debates will be numerous, and will spread to all under heaven. I am humbled by my participation in high government, how would it be appropriate to remain silent, going against the instructions [bestowed] by Your Majesty the other day, [thus] becoming a criminal of the realm?⁵⁰⁶

After offering a detailed analysis of the issue at hand, and his own verdict, suggesting that Wang Yaochen's mistakes had not been premeditated, the memorial ends with another reminder of the favors bestowed on him by the emperor. Except for Du Yan, none of the names involved had been very prominent so far, and in fact the main point to take away from this is the decrease in self-confidence with which Fan Zhongyan presents his argument, in all likelihood already reflecting his sense that their status at court had changed, and that the attack on his associate(s) might be a consequence of that. Despite presenting arguments that he considers convincing, he

⁵⁰⁵ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3583-84.

⁵⁰⁶ CB. vol. 6, j. 148, p. 3584-3587. Another memorial on that matter by Ouyang Xiu: p. 3587-89.

feels the need to remind the emperor of his earlier statement that one needed to speak freely, without fear of being accused of factionalism. It is hard not to see a connection between his reminding the emperor of what amounts to a promise not to act on factional suspicions, and the earlier exchange about factions. Also in 6/1044 the emperor sent down a rescript that allegedly frightened the close ministers, and even in the abbreviated form we see today it reads very much like a critique specifically directed at the ‘good men’ and their measures:

The rescript read: Who would be the appropriate person to garrison that western area?
The people’s strength is already imperiled, the finances and taxes not yet strong.
The army is exceedingly numerous, how can it be made to be skilled and a match [for the enemy]?
The generals and ministers do not get along well, how can one control them and establish [harmony]?
Ambitious fellows should be prevented from struggling for wealth and fame.⁵⁰⁷

The ‘close ministers’ according to the *Changbian* replied point by point, but their argument reads very much like a defense of the core positions of Fan Zhongyan and his associates, and accordingly the memorial was included in the *wenji* of Fan Zhongyan; note how the emperor lamented the situation of the farmers and the military, apparently he shared the opinion that not enough had been done on these fronts. Although phrased in the most general way, Renzong also took another stab at careerists who “struggle for wealth and fame.” Yet, it is the fact that he points out that there was no unity at court between “ministers and generals” that is the most interesting; while he was not naming names of ‘good men’, Fan’s reply to this particular point of criticism appears to refer to a discussion about the punishment of border officials, and thus specifically to a disagreement between the ‘good men’ themselves.⁵⁰⁸ This seems to lead us to

⁵⁰⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3622-3623, QSW. vol. 18, j. 373, p. 121-122. The quotes have been taken from this detailed reply by the ‘assisting ministers’. Note also a later exchange with Zhang Dexiang, not a reform associate, in which the emperor also bemoans the current state of affairs for the people (CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3638).

⁵⁰⁸ Mentioning the name Zhang Kang seems to refer to the case of Teng Zongliang and Zhang Kang, see footnote above. In his argument for leniency, among other things Fan Zhongyan points out that if one restricts the commanding generals at the border too much, such as by being too strict about their accounting, it would be undermining their authority (CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3458), aside from being impractical. This echoes the reply to the emperor’s exhortations here, which talks about the need to allow commanding generals to use their own discretion,

the counterintuitive conclusion that one of the problems for Renzong was that the ‘good men’ were not united enough in their public discussion, and it must be noted that this memorial came before the big dispute about the Qidan and their plans to attack.

Subsequently Fan and Bi memorialized about the problems at the border in Shanxi and Hebei in detail, and Fan asked to be himself sent to the border to implement his plans; shortly afterwards; this request was granted.⁵⁰⁹ It will not be possible to solve all the problems in chronology that the sources contain, but the general direction of the development is clear enough. In response to more disasters, as well as the problems at the border, a series of memorials by Yu Jing and other censors demanded in more and more heightened tone that the emperor finally heed their requests for reform and selection of ‘good men’, or dismiss them for their inability to do their job and make him see the errors of his ways.⁵¹⁰ In other words, they once again called on the emperor to choose between them, the ‘good men’, and the others, the bad ones, rather than keeping the ‘good men’ in the limbo between support and restraint that they found themselves in. On the other hand, according to a different report without much context, Fan Zhongyan in a memorial of

and thus seems to repeat Fan’s position in the earlier debate, although the link is not very direct (CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3623).

⁵⁰⁹ (6/1044). CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3624. CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3636.

⁵¹⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3655-3657. Here, I cannot quite follow Skonicki’s argument that the increasingly self-deprecating tone of these memorials is a reflection of the reformer’s realization that they had made a self-defeating argument when they had drawn on cosmological arguments earlier, because it spoke against them now when they were in charge (Skonicki, “Employing the right kind of men.” p. 96). The utilitarian nature of these claims that he argues for in general in his article could be adapted to this situation, after all, continued disasters in this reading could only mean that the emperor still was not making enough of an effort to support the right people (which he was not), and their call for their own dismissal and punishment was simply another way of upping the game and forcing the emperor to decide between them, the ‘good men’, and the others, the ‘bad men’, that is, to be the activist ruler they wanted him to be. The disasters certainly did not help matters, but they simply realized that they were losing politically, and made a last ditch effort to change that situation, and the emperor’s question provided the direction for their argument (CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3638).

8/1044 suggested an administrative reform modeled on the Zhou administration, and thus purportedly for the most part following the Zhouli; his core demand was that high-level ministers and chancellors (*fuchen* 輔臣) should be entrusted with full jurisdiction over one of the six classical areas of administration. Fan himself asked to be given command of the military branch, but received the judicial branch instead; once again he offered full accountability should he fail. Implementation of this reform apparently never went beyond this first appointment that remained entirely nominal.⁵¹¹ It would seem that only now, in the face of defeat after his plea for recognition as faction having been rejected, he made a more determined push for more direct institutional influence, and in the guise of administrative reform tried to gain hold over the agencies that dealt with military matters. However, in a situation in which he and the ‘good men’ were under suspicion, and had come under attack already, this had to remain a futile attempt. Soon this precarious situation would come to an end, because when in 11/1044 an edict was handed down against factions, ordering the censors to take notice and report, the target of this edict could not have been clearer.⁵¹² This edict constituted a thorough rejection of the ‘good men’ and their proposals regarding beneficial factions, in favor of a unified officialdom.⁵¹³ However, despite repeated resignation requests it took until 1/1045 before Fan Zhongyan and Fu Bi were officially allowed to resign from their posts as vice chancellor and vice commissioner of the military commission, respectively, although they apparently had left the capital earlier on emissary or military missions.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ (8/1044) CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3673. For a longer, differing version and a follow-up memorial, see: QSW. vol. 18, j. 373, p. 126-134.

⁵¹² CB. vol. 6, j. 153, p. 3718. Fan offered his resignation immediately afterwards.

⁵¹³ Skonicki, “Employing the right kind of men.” p. 95.

⁵¹⁴ CB. vol. 6, j. 154, p. 3740. Du Yan resigns at the same time (p. 3741).

Around the time when his associates Han Qi and Yu Jing resigned, in 3/1045, Ouyang Xiu handed in a lengthy memorial to defend their association, which for better differentiation will be called the ‘No Faction’ memorial henceforth, because on the surface it represented a rhetoric shift from ‘On Factions’. In it, the shift from the self-confident position taken in ‘On Factions’ cannot be more obvious, a shift that again is a reflection of the changed circumstances of a time when the good men did not even control the public sphere any more, since virtually all of them had been demoted in some way or other.⁵¹⁵ In many ways, this memorial provides a summary of the positions that Ouyang Xiu and his associates held, as well an analysis of their defeat, and therefore will be discussed here in more detail, while at the same time taking the opportunity to sum up our findings on the *qingli* faction, their argument and self-perception along the way:

I have heard that a *shi* who does not forget himself, will not be acting loyally and trustworthily; if what he says is not unpleasant to the ear, then he is not in fact remonstrating with his superiors. Therefore I will not avoid the danger that the crowd of evil elements will gnash their teeth, and dare to adopt the appearance of the one person that censures a grave mistake, [thereby] solely depending on Your Majesty gracefully adopting [an attitude of] introspection. In all humility I have observed that Du Yan, Han Qi, Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi, and the others all are ministers who all along had been entrusted with government positions by Your Majesty, when within a very short period they followed each other in resigning from office; the officials of the realm all had known all along that they were of the virtue that should be employed [in government], and had not heard that they had [committed] an offence justifying resignation.⁵¹⁶

Here, we come full circle from the letter by Fan Zhongyan to Yan Shu, since Ouyang Xiu’s introductory statement is very reminiscent of the self-righteous stance of the lone ‘good man’ that Fan adopted towards his mentor, while also relegating the final decision to the addressee of

⁵¹⁵ Lü Yijian’s family, that is, one of his sons, appears to have reclaimed their position in it (7/1044) after several months of silence, although with a memorial that did not concern the reforms or the reformers (CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3666). At his death in 9/1044, Lü Yijian himself received tokens of great esteem by the emperor (CB. vol. 6, j. 152, p. 3698-99).

⁵¹⁶ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3763-64. See also: 論杜衍范仲淹等罷政事狀 . QSW. vol. 32, j. 685, p. 213-216.

the text. His selflessness is pitted against a crowd of evil elements, but embedded in a public that knows the truth about the ‘good men’s’ virtue and innocence.

Although my post is outside [of the inner court circles], and I’m not completely familiar with the matter, I still humbly observe that since antiquity lesser people have framed and slandered the loyal and virtuous; their intelligence does not reach far, [but if] they want to comprehensively entrap those who are [good and fine], they then merely need to name them as faction, and if they want to agitate against eminent ministers, then they must frame them for monopolizing power. What is the reason for this? If they remove one good man but the majority of good people are still there, then this is not yet to the advantage of the lesser men; one wants to get rid of all of them, but then again, good people hardly make mistakes, [therefore] it is hard to even find a flaw with one or two of them; only when naming them a faction, can one then expel them all at the same time. With regard to the eminent ministers, their worth already has been recognized [by the emperor], and they have received trustful appointments, therefore one cannot agitate against them on account of a different matter, it is only monopolizing power that the ruler hates, and therefore one has to bring that forth, only then can one topple them [from power]. I reckon that among the four people of Du Yan and company, none has committed a grave mistake, and yet they all have been expelled at the same time; Fu Bi and Fan Zhongyan’s positions were also rather eminent, and yet they suddenly have met the misfortune of a wedge being driven [between them and the emperor], it must be talk of factionalism and monopolizing power, which rose up to confuse the emperor’s cleverness and perceptiveness.

He goes on to describe the mechanism of political slander: the problem is that lesser men have a hard time to attack their opponents for legitimate reasons, given that they are many, established and trusted, and hardly have any fault; therefore there is no other way but to slander them as factionalists and usurpers of power. Especially in the latter case, this is effective because the ruler is sensitive to this kind of accusation. While kept general, this passage would seem to support the argument made above that Renzong was wary of excessive, publicly visible power at his court, and attempted to balance different groups and offset positions in a way that would safeguard his own status. The ‘good men’ themselves suggested that Lü Yijian never was far removed from power, despite the ostentatious support for Fan Zhongyan, and in 9/1044 Lü Yijian still, or once again, was in very good standing, if Renzong’s reaction to his death is any indication.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 152, p. 3698.

Note how within all the hyperbole, Ouyang Xiu is careful to qualify the ‘goodness’ of the good men, when he says that they are without *grave* mistakes. In fact, after the famous ‘faction question’, some mistakes did surface, regarding one of the core claims of the good men, namely their ability to select the right kind of men: firstly, there was the matter of the financial commissioners cum inspectors that allegedly had been hand picked, a measure which judging by the repeated complaints and memorials had never been implemented to the ‘good men’s’ satisfaction. In 8/1044 Ouyang Xiu personally took up the inspector position in Hebei, and used the permission to report things despite leaving the remonstrance position, which the emperor granted on this occasion, to defend the measure against what he considered unfounded, self-interested accusations; Ouyang pointed out that the position was a difficult one, prone to offend the protégés of high officials, and asked the court to have the allegations investigated carefully by the *liang fu*, to see if there was any concrete evidence.⁵¹⁸ The attack on his pet project had come from Bao Zheng 包拯 (999–1062) and a censor, both of whom accused the inspectors of reporting even the smallest infractions in order to ensure their own advancement and appear as if they were fulfilling their duty, without verifying if there was anything to it, creating terror and chaos among local officials.⁵¹⁹ This led the emperor to talk about reining them in, and in 9/1044, four financial and judicial commissioners cum inspectors were demoted, at least one of whom had been selected when the ‘good men’ had finally been able to push a selection process through,

⁵¹⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3684, 3690.

⁵¹⁹ CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3689-90. Indeed, Ouyang Xiu had personally memorialized about two cases (presumably not ‘good men’ appointments) where inspectors had not done their duty and had let uprisings happen without doing anything; the officials in question had been demoted (CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3539-3540). On the other hand, Wang Su supposedly did a good job in his inspector position in Huainan, not being too strict and nitpicking, but still preventing people from transgressing, due to his watertight impeachments that invariably led to convictions (CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3635). Note that there are many Wangs with similar character as given name, making mix-ups likely. Therefore, Ouyang Xiu in the previous memorial could have referred to this case as a positive example.

however limited that may have been.⁵²⁰ Whatever the veracity of the claims and counterclaims, the impeached inspectors were named as a factor in their downfall, and featured prominently in the final edict that forbade factions and heralded their definitive fall from power;⁵²¹ in another incident, younger officials recommended by ‘good men’ were impeached and demoted for various misdeeds, mostly for their outrageous misbehavior while intoxicated. While Han Qi disputed that this was an issue worthy of the emperor’s attention, both the case of the inspectors and this episode were a major embarrassment for a group of officials that argued for accountability, getting the right men, and guaranteed recommendations.⁵²² Again, it should be pointed out that without the emperor’s tacit consent, by withholding his support, all of these attacks would have been much harder to make, and it is likely that whatever real problems existed at least partly were caused by the very fact that they never appear to have had full control over the implementation of the measure to begin with. In many ways the fate of the *anchashi*/ inspector measure embodies the general predicament that the ‘good men’ were in at a time when they supposedly dominated the court and held sway over the emperor. Bao Zheng is another example of an official with an ambiguous relationship to the reforms, he appeared to criticize the inspectors here, but did defend another measure when it was abolished.⁵²³

⁵²⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 152, p. 3696-3697. For the first selection, see: CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3480. It seems that the demotion was connected to an uprising.

⁵²¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3637. This comment is recorded earlier, though. The final edict points to the misdeeds of “those who received the order to inspect” (CB. vol. 6, j. 153, p. 3718).

⁵²² CB. vol. 6, j. 153, p. 3715-3716.

⁵²³ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3762. In a later memorial, Bao Zheng once again would demand that the court choose a talented individual for that position in one circuit (its independence had been clipped, but apparently it still existed), which would seem to show that he was in fact agreeing with the core demand of the ‘good men’ to be selective when filling this kind of position, his only claim earlier had been that, as is, the Inspectors were not doing their job, and implicitly, one had not found the right men for these positions (QSW. vol. 25, j. 540, p. 336-337). From this perspective, the ‘anti-reformer’ Bao Zheng suddenly becomes part of the discursive group of ‘good men’, because Ouyang Xiu himself had lamented about similar problems, which were caused by *not* following his advice. See also

This and the next paragraph of the ‘No Factions’ memorial also highlight how Ouyang Xiu’s argument had changed since writing ‘On Factions’: firstly, in the earlier text he still had tried to give a positive spin to the term ‘faction’ itself, when arguing that only good men can indeed form sustainable factions that are truly unified, and when employed as such could have a unifying influence on the whole realm. Here, Ouyang Xiu all but acknowledges that the term has a negative connotation, and as such is merely a tool for the bad men to slander the good ones. Secondly, ‘On factions’ highlighted the unity among the ‘good men’, whereas in this text Ouyang Xiu points to the diversity among his associates:

Please allow me to explain it in detail: in previous years Fan Zhongyan first became famous at the center and in the provinces for his loyal and trustworthy outspoken criticism; the virtuous literati of the realm vied with each other to express their admiration, while at the time he was framed by treacherous ministers for having formed a faction, [thus] it still was hard to make a clear judgment. [However,] recently Your Majesty has promoted this group of people, [to serve] in the two administrations together; [You] observed the way they attended to government matters, enabling you to judge them. Indeed, Du Yan behaves himself in an honest and knowledgeable way, and follows the rules and regulations carefully, Zhongyan then is broadminded and self confident, and not in doubt [about things], Han Qi then is pure and upright, as well as straightforward and direct, Fu Bi on the other hand is bright and quick, as well as determined and keen, [therefore we see that] conduct and character of these four people are entirely different; although they all are united in their utmost loyalty, their point of view is different, and therefore when debating issues, they more often than not do not agree with each other.⁵²⁴

Ouyang Xiu grants the emperor that in the early years during Fan’s rise to central government, it was hard for Renzong to see the truth about Fan and his group given that he was still only talking about things, and also due to the conflicting evaluations offered by the good and bad elements in the realm. Now, however, he should have had the opportunity to realize from his own observation of them at court that the four most important figureheads of this association actually were rather diverse in character and outlook, and were only united in their utmost loyalty. It

Fan Zhongyan’s memorial, containing similar criticism (CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3671). It is merely the fact that the Changbian groups this with another critical memorial and the emperor’s criticism, juxtaposing it with Ouyang Xiu’s defense of the measure, that makes Bao Zheng appear a staunch anti-reformer here. There seems to be an indirect social connection via Yan Shu, for Bao Zheng writes a memorial asking to reinstate him after Yan had been forced to resign (QSW. vol. 25, j. 539, p. 316), supposedly on the initiative of Cai Xiang and Sun Fu, in retaliation for having Ouyang transferred to an outside position earlier (CB. vol. 6, j. 152, p. 3699).

⁵²⁴ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3764.

seems to me that, indeed like a good lawyer, Ouyang Xiu in ‘On Factions’ and in this memorial is putting the spotlight on different aspects of his position, depending on the circumstances that he wrote these texts in. In the former, Ouyang Xiu argued that only good men could bring about real unity, because there was still hope that the emperor could be swayed to adopt the ‘good men’s’ position. In the latter, he highlights the diversity of viewpoints and opinions present among the good men, because by now the edict banning factions had targeted them as a coherent, political group working for common goals. Yet, even in ‘On Factions’ he had never said that the ‘good men’ would actually agree on every particularity, and in this memorial he still maintained what he had said earlier about what brought about the unity of the ‘good men’: their common norms and values, but as we will see below, also an element of social ritual. In other words, Ouyang Xiu indeed argued like a lawyer, as James T.C. Liu has said, but not one who lies, or does not have a coherent position, but one who argues his case in a way that is adapted to the circumstances, in this case, dropping the incriminating word faction as a self-description, to achieve the best outcome possible for his side. Ouyang goes on to provide examples for arguments among the ‘good men’:

For example, when Du Yan wanted to severely punish Teng Zongliang, Fan Zhongyan strongly argued against it and relaxed it (the punishment). Zhongyan said that the Qidan certainly will attack Hedong, and asked to urgently prepare the border defenses, Fu Bi considered nine factors, and strongly argued that the Qidan would certainly not come. [To name another] example, Yin Zhu, who also was named [a member of] Fan Zhongyan’s party, subsequently disputed the policy regarding the fortification of Shuiluo, whereupon Han Qi agreed with Yin Zhu and disagreed with Liu Hu; Fan Zhongyan then sided with Liu Hu and went against Yin Zhu. These few incidents give ample illustration to what Your Majesty knew already all along: these four people can said to be virtuous to the point of being completely impartial. When intermingling with each other [socially] day by day, then they would never get tired of affirming each other of their admiration, but when discussing matters in an official function, then they would impartially debate [the matter] at court in front of the emperor, and there would be no partiality [for each other]. Talking about it from this perspective, then I observe that Du Yan and the others truly attained what the Han

historian described as ‘loyal ministers have the integrity (*jie*) to not get along well’;⁵²⁵ when lesser people slander them as faction that can be called [nothing else but] a false accusation.⁵²⁶

Ouyang Xiu here harnesses the many instances of discord between ‘good men’ as proof for their sincerity and impartiality, since “loyal ministers have the integrity to not get along well.” As seen above, these examples to a certain extent can be corroborated by the sources, and in fact represent only a fraction of the actual disputes among them, down to the very content of the *qingli* program, albeit the peripheral parts. It is interesting, for example, that Ouyang Xiu did not mention the dispute about the land survey for the reform of official land, in which Yu Jing had severely criticized the way it had been conducted, which according to the explanation in some cases had effectively led to land being seized from peasants by the local administration, because it appeared uncultivated after the disasters.⁵²⁷ In other words, what little practical policies they implemented other than the inspector measure, in fact were running into problems as well, problems that could be interpreted as further underpinning the accusation brought forth earlier by Lü Yijian and the likes that the ‘good men’, and their normative premise was not going to lead to good government.

At the same time, the fact that it was their own associate, Yu Jing, who criticized the problems, and not just these, gives some credibility to Ouyang Xiu’s claim here about the personal ethics of the ‘good men’, which supposedly was such that they spoke out about problems, even if such criticism was bound to harm other members of the association, or the overall cause. Yet, we have

⁵²⁵ Or, when considering the node/joint translation of *jie*: “it is the property of loyal ministers to be united in their disagreement.”

⁵²⁶ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3764-65.

⁵²⁷ CB. vol. 6, j. 145, p. 3511. This is recorded for 1043, but the memorial itself is of 1044. There are other reports of problems with land surveys (CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3482).

also seen that they did have the common interest, exemplified in the measures I to IV, of selecting and promoting the ‘good men’, an interest that could justifiably be called partial and factional, given that it was supposed to bring people into office who were like the ‘good men’, and as such actual or potential associates. There is an objective argument to be made for a meritocratic service culture in an administration, explaining the draw of this ethics on officials who saw the problems of their times. However, from the perspective of someone who had been left out, or who did not share the beliefs of the ‘good men’ in the normative content of the term, and witnessed how the ‘good men’ at times saw the need to be extremely exclusive and confrontational, it was quite reasonable to criticize it as just another, more elaborate way for an association to get ahead.

On top of that, the accusation made by the eunuch, namely that in the future literati who were not part of the association would not dare to talk any more, to some extent is borne out by the facts: while the ‘good men’ themselves spoke of loud opposition, in fact, prior to the final downfall of the ‘good men’, hardly any discursive, critical memorial about the reform program could be located that would not have been written by an associate, with the possible exception of Bao Zheng and his memorial against how the inspector measure had turned out.⁵²⁸ An explanation favorable to Ouyang Xiu and the good men would be that the will and courage to talk by definition made the speaker part of the good men, since that was part of their self-definition. This is an analysis along the lines of James T.C. Liu, who drew the factional lines along terms such as “career-minded bureaucrats”, and “idealistic literati”, which to some extent has inspired my

⁵²⁸ CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3689-90.

focus on the term ‘good men’.⁵²⁹ Yet, it would be a bit too simple to completely follow this line of argument. In fact, other officials did not dare to speak because it was dangerous to do so about some things, or persons, that were dear to the ‘good men’: Ouyang Xiu of all people, in his function as censor, during *qingli* attacked a minor official for speaking out of line and impeaching a reformer, the military commissioner Han Qi, “without cause”, asking for his punishment. In Ouyang’s opinion, if one allowed minor officials to wantonly attack an official in charge of the military, and disrespect the court in this way, solely by brandishing his rhetoric (*wenfa* 文法), then this would lead to chaos in the hierarchy.⁵³⁰ In another instance, the ‘good men’ censors banded up on another minor official who had dared to publicly make an argument in favor of the peace accord with the Xi Xia, going so far as to demand his execution.⁵³¹ Together with the other instances of ad hominem attacks, against Lü Yijian, or Li Shu, these examples show that it would have been political suicide to stick one’s head out in this situation, and accordingly most of the officials that were not associates of Fan Zhongyan did not do so, instead waiting for the tide to turn in their favor. It was only when the emperor gave the signal, by withholding any verdict on the faction question at first, that the accusations started to appear.

This raises a simple question, however: what was it that marked someone as an insider of this group, allowing him to speak up and criticize things, and debate with Fan Zhongyan without him

⁵²⁹ This is a thread that runs through his work, culminating in *Reform in Sung China* about the *xining* reforms; for an early example applied to Fan Zhongyan’s case, see: Liu, “An Early Sung Reformer.” p. 105-108.

⁵³⁰ CB. vol. 6, j. 144, p. 3488-89 (10/1043). This was connected to the Teng Zongliang case earlier, for the minor official in question, Yan Du, was tasked with the investigation.

⁵³¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 142, p. 3424-25 (8/1043).

getting ‘resentful’ in the end?⁵³² In other words, how did one know a ‘good man’? We have already talked about shared normative convictions, leading to some core measures and positions that were not disputed. But the above passage also talks of a second mechanism of coherence, and once more the solution is one that splits the problem into two sides, and in fact two localities: on one hand there is the impartiality and loyalty at play in the government hall, causing them to discuss things in this ‘public’ setting without bias and in good faith, but there is also a second, social mechanism, which, however, would have implications for the ‘public’ one: “when intermingling with each other [socially] day by day, then they would never get tired of affirming each other of their admiration... .”⁵³³ In other words, the other side of the duality was taken up by repetitive, ritual behavior, and Ouyang Xiu describes the basis of his association as being both ritual and sincere.

Given that it was not the place to overemphasize the unity among them, there is not much information about this aspect, but a text by Ouyang Xiu in the *Xin Wudai shi* provides a bit more on that: the overall argument here follows the second memorial, in that accusations of factionalism are a tool for the bad against the good, but in terms of historical precedents and lessons learned, ‘On Factions’ also finds an echo here, since despite dropping the eponymous term as a (self-)description, it is the ability of the ruler to see behind factional accusations, and implicitly his willingness to tolerate the naturally occurring associations between ‘good men’, which makes the difference between a successful and a failed state. In ‘On Factions’, Ouyang Xiu had claimed that for the ‘factions of good men’. In his historical comment, Ouyang Xiu then

⁵³² CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3639.

⁵³³ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3764.

describes the nature of this association, and the mechanism of reputation, *ming*, in getting good men into government:

[...] One's relatives and old associates can be branded as factional partisans, one's companions and friends can be branded factional partisans, fellow office holders and classmates can be branded factional partisans, even student disciples and former secretaries can be branded factional partisans. And to the extent that they share a common character, they all tend to be 'good people' (*shanren* 善人).⁵³⁴ [...]

It is naturally inherent for 'good men' to relish in associating with others of common character. Upon learning of other 'good men', praise for one another will surely occur, and such simple praise leads to slurs of factionalism; in recruiting good men for government, recommendation of one for another will surely occur, and such a simple recommendation leads to slurs of factionalism. If persons hear of moral men but do not offer praise, then news of such men below never reaches our ruler's ears; and if people observe moral men but dare not recommend them, then the witnessing of such men never reaches the ruler's eyes. And with each day the moral become estranged as the petty become more intimate. Who will then assist a dumbfounded ruler of humanity in laying plans for political order? [...] We lament: the ruler of humanity must cast a scrutinizing eye on charges of factionalism.⁵³⁵

It is just natural that 'good men' would be drawn to each other, and seek each other's company, and therefore what marked them as such was their social relationships with other good men, as well as the fact that others as a matter of course would praise and recommend them. In other words, it was the practice of social and political ritual that marked somebody as an insider, a mark that then could be used against them by their enemies. However, blanket injunctions against factionalism made these publicly performed relationships all but impossible, because 'good men' had to be afraid of being accused of forming one when they openly recommended other good men, and as a consequence there would not be any such men left in the realm to help the ruler govern. In other words, once again we come back to our core demand for the emperor to discern between good and bad men, even when he went against factions; Han Qi had offered a

⁵³⁴ *Shanren* and *junzi* are used interchangeably in this text, opposite *xiaoren*.

⁵³⁵ With some minor adjustments to my terms, this translation follows: Richard L. Davis (transl.), *Historical records of the five dynasties*, by Ouyang Xiu. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. p. 294-295. *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. j. 315, p. 382-383. (equivalent to Zhonghua Shuju edition).

similar warning in a memorial of 12/1044, after the emperor issued his blanket ban on factionalism.⁵³⁶

When read as a positive description of good associations, that means that for Ouyang Xiu it is not shared opinion or ideology that binds good men together, but the fact that they naturally and publicly would recognize each other as such; at the same time, being ‘good men’ was their only real commonality. One good man begot other good men in this process, until all officials were good, either by virtue of converting or by being exchanged. Without explicitly calling it as such, Ouyang Xiu here describes ritual, repetitive behavior, which, other than occurring habitually between good men, is not filled with a more specific normative content, and certainly not with a specific program. At the same time, what he describes amounts to a non-institutionalized version of the core program that the *qingli* reformers had suggested earlier, where the process of recommendation and mutual praise had been introduced into the administration of official personnel.

We could dismiss this ritual-normative duality as a mere claim, but for the fact that it maps very well onto the narrative of the ‘good men’s’ relationships and disputes, their ideas and political actions. Indeed, we have seen in this part that membership with the ‘good men’ was not defined by adherence to a specific classic and its ideological thrust, it also was not contingent on agreeing with each other in all questions of ideas, politics, and border strategy, and certainly not

⁵³⁶ 乞別白朋黨奏. QSW. vol. 39, j. 844, p. 218. Here as well, despite dropping the word faction for ‘good men’, Han Qi still effectively calls on the emperor to actively differentiate between the good group of men and the bad faction, and that a blanket prohibition of factionalism would prevent good things from happening, and good people from being lauded as such.

on a fixed institutional program. We have identified a set of core ideas and beliefs held by the core political group we called ‘good men’, such as in the selectiveness of official service, the utility of public statements and debates, and the necessity to adopt a strong posture towards the ‘barbarians’, beliefs which despite their general, nondescript nature do constitute a concrete commonality that is measurable by virtue of how many officials offered similar arguments in their memorials; Fan Zhongyan and his associates also clearly did make arrangements with each other, and planned their moves, much like the accusations of factionalism would say. In fact, by virtue of their rise and fall, they all but were sanctioned as a faction by the court, despite Renzong’s reluctance to give them official recognition as a ‘good’ faction. Aside from the political beliefs, they also shared a personal ethic, of how one should act as a good official in terms of speaking up about problems, participating in debates in good faith,⁵³⁷ accepting accountability,⁵³⁸ and solving the practical issues in one’s jurisdiction with common sense. And yes, they also shared the goal of making political proclamations and acts more sincere, that is, relating form to content in a more meaningful way. In addition to that, ‘good men’ such as Su Shunqin would state openly that it was Fan Zhongyan’s (utmost) sincerity (*cheng* 誠) that was the force that moved the people, and call on him to make an effort to make good on his word.⁵³⁹ In all of this, debating issues and offering different opinions was proclaimed to be a hallmark,

⁵³⁷ E.g. Fan asserting that a request is made in complete sincerity: CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3529.

⁵³⁸ Ostentatiously offered by the ‘good men’ in memorials, e.g. by Fan Zhongyan: CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3529; by Fu Bi in the Qidan question: CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3639. By Yu Jing ‘et al.’, in a series of memorials: CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3656-57. But Fan also demands accountability of the “high ministers”; they should state in a memorial, to be put before the emperor, that they guaranteed that the Qidan will not invade, and not unite with the Tanguts, and should be punished accordingly should they be wrong (CB. vol. 6, j. 150, p. 3636). This essentially is what Fu Bi does, see above.

⁵³⁹ QSW. vol. 41, j. 877, p. 53-54. Discussed above.

not a shortcoming, of the ‘good men’, while at the same time people were excluded openly or secretly for their radicalism when it was opportune to do so.

Therefore, letters such as Su Shunqin’s, in which he appealed to Fan Zhongyan to be more sincere, as well as the compromising aspects of the central reform measures, also give testimony to the fact that Fan Zhongyan and his core associates were not just radical, at least not in the sense defined by Seligman et al.: in everyday politics the shared normative ideas were not specific enough, and in fact not even meant to achieve unanimity among the ‘good men’, even when it came to the core reformers themselves, as the multiple examples of discord among them show that were discussed above. This goes even more for those literati at the edges of their association, where we find figures such as Yan Shu, Li Gou, Shi Jie, and others, who at times found themselves pitted against the core reform group despite being their mentors, or consciously excluded from the political endeavor despite having supported them; however, despite all differences, anger, and exclusion, the ties to these men were never cut entirely in terms of social ritual. On the contrary, if anything Ouyang Xiu’s relationships became more inclusive over time, as we have argued several times now. We see better than before that in practice and in theory to be called a ‘good man’ could also be a ritual statement, and as such by definition not connected to a more concrete or universal truth other than the natural convergence and coherence that these ‘good men’ supposedly had. The very emptiness of the term, its lack of concrete ideological definition, lent itself to be used in this fashion, and rather than being a fundamental flaw or anomaly of these groups, in fact it was the only way to uphold and maintain social relationships in view of an association of independent thinkers that did not and were not meant to have the same opinion on everything, as Ouyang Xiu pointed out in his memorial. It

created a potential, and, in Seligman et al.'s words, a subjunctive that allowed the 'good men' to act 'as if' they had something in common, and time and again re-form their relationship in this way, after debating an issue heatedly and passionately, when it became clear that their intellectual approaches were indeed different, or when they felt that they had to argue against a mentor, in other words, when the fragmentation of their social and political realities reared its ugly head.⁵⁴⁰ Only a subjunctive allowed them to do so without actually changing anything in their beliefs and concrete opinions, or without heeding a mentor when they deemed it wrong or unwise to do so, but wanted to keep this relationship. This is why time and again the social connections we see in this period elude clear definitions of who was in and who was out of the 'good men', or for and against them and their program, at least beyond the core group of Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu, Han Qi, and Fu Bi. Whatever the reality behind the claims that they were not angry with each other after their disagreements, the fact that in their core configuration the political group kept working together through dismissal and political defeat, in the case of Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu for almost 40 years, speaks to the stability that this relationship based on the duality of ritual and sincerity would have. Even in a case such as the deep ideological rift concerning a core value of *guwen* that we discussed in the introduction, taking place between Ouyang Xiu and Fu Bi, it was possible to preserve their relationship through it for several more years afterwards. In fact, it is the very diversity of opinions that could be legitimately held by the group that called themselves 'good men' that shows the strength and potential of social ritual. Even the realization that some 'good men', especially among the younger generation and on the fringes of the political undertaking, were more radical than others and therefore less inclined to compromise, does not take much away from this point; instead, it reinforces the observation that

⁵⁴⁰ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 24-26, 43.

in this way the divisive effects of a diverse range of ideas and opinions could be mitigated, and relationships formed that hardly ever were unambiguous and clearly defined, but all the more real and significant. It was what we have defined as ritual that enabled the ‘good men’ to be both inclusive and exclusive, depending on the situation and circumstances, a fact that could not become much clearer than with the case of Fan Zhongyan’s interactions with his supposed arch enemy, Lü Yijian. The 1030s had seen intense, and decidedly public political struggles between them, but we have already seen how the ‘good men’, or at least some of them, in all probability had forged an alliance with Lü and Xia Song in the early 1040s when it appeared opportune to do so, however temporary that may have been. Already back then Fan Zhongyan had stated publicly that he bore no personal grudge, and had acted without malice towards his opponent. Yet, it is a much later instance of social ritual that shows how far its inclusiveness could potentially go: for when Lü Yijian died, Fan Zhongyan wrote in mourning, pointing to the successes of his opponent, and the difficulties of his high position at court, between the emperor and the officials. Lü’s worries about the state and the border clearly had caused his illness, and when the news of his death reached Fan, he could not help but cry. In this way, in spite of all their disagreements he exhibits the empathy that is at the heart of ritual behavior and community.⁵⁴¹ The existence of this letter does not negate their disputes, or turn them into friends after all, and was easy to write after his opponent had passed away. However, without it an important, equally significant aspect of their ambiguous relationship would remain untold, and the great potential of social ritual to mend in its subjunctive what could not be mended otherwise would remain hidden. It is only the subsequent decline in significance of this kind of inclusive social ritual, which could include one’s enemies, that deepened the factional divides and made the divides, but not the relationships,

⁵⁴¹ 祭呂相公文. QSW. vol. 19, j. 391, p. 85-86.

permanent; while the exchange of letters between Wang Anshi and Sima Guang that we discussed in the introduction appears to be an example for such inclusive social ritual, it actually proves the rule, because what ritual there is in these letters is also intricately tied to the irreconcilable beliefs that both express in these letters as well, and the resulting disambiguation leaves ritual as such unable to fulfill its role as a subjunctive beyond its limited effects in the letters themselves.

To reiterate, it is the subsequent disappearance of the inclusive aspect of social ritual that is the anomaly to be highlighted in this study; here it must therefore be emphasized that within the framework of ritual and sincerity as discussed by Seligman et al., the diagnosis that to different degrees both was present in the activities of our group of actors is not that remarkable in and by itself, although the historically specific manifestation of the assumed human universal is still worthy to be discussed, in my opinion. What is more remarkable is the fact that at least the core group of ‘good men’ seemed to be very conscious of the existence of this duality and its separate functions, and expressed it in their writings. This is especially interesting given that, once again, they did have a sincere agenda, an agenda however that in its activism and with the sequence of importance it propagated mainly offered an argument on whom to promote, and also how to decide and act in a given situation, but did not tell them what to do exactly, universally. This observation alone might be sufficient to explain why the *qingli* good men disagreed with the *xining* reforms implemented by Wang Anshi, who in his reform project was much more wedded to the details of his program of what to do. While some ‘good men’ certainly had a firm opinion on practical measures too, this was not what constituted the foundation of their association. In so far as theoretical discussions about decision-making exist, like those by Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi,

they assume that the diversity of opinion, and the public nature of the procedure, will ensure that the right decision was being made by the emperor and the court, because it provided the range of information and public scrutiny necessary for such an impartial decision.

What we have offered so far is a largely positive analysis of the group of ‘good men’ and the coherence among them; we have argued that their way of forming a diverse and far-reaching socio-political association based on social ritual and normative claims, ritual and sincerity, by and large was successful, and to a certain degree, and under certain circumstances could include their political enemies. At the same time, this diversity and ambiguity in their associations points against entrenched, well-defined political groups of opponents that the reformers themselves in various ways and intensities have highlighted as having caused their downfall. In fact, there is no sign that such organized, public resistance to the reforms existed at all, or that opponents that might have secretly schemed against them after all were actually the ones that brought an end to the *qingli* program. However, if they were so successful in including or silencing opponents, then why did the project of the ‘good men’ fail in *qingli*? All things considered, and in spite of the plausible claim that there existed covert resistance from officials that were affected by the program or the attacks of the ‘good men’, one single most important factor can be identified that explains their failure: Emperor Renzong, and the fact that he remained unconvinced by the basic argument that the ‘good men’ were trying to make time and again, namely that Renzong needed to promote them and their kind, and render them unconditional support. We will return to

Ouyang Xiu’s memorial ‘No Faction’ to elaborate on this point:

I affirm that the power of ruling a state, in no way is something that the ministers below get to usurp. [However], I humbly think that [in the case of] Fan Zhongyan, since entering the two administrations (*liang fu*), one has not seen any trace of him usurping power, instead one only has seen him being proficient in declining [positions of] power. When it comes to power, one needs to get official status and [a high] position, only then can one wield it, therefore a minister of the kind that wields power, must covet [such] official status and [high] position. Since Your Majesty has

summoned Han Qi and Fan Zhongyan from Shaanxi, Han Qi and the others have declined up to five or six times, and Your Majesty has also summoned them five or six times. To give an example, Fu Bi has been ordered to become a Hanlin scholar three times, as well as twice being ordered to become a vice commissioner of the military commission; each of the orders, he without fail sincerely declined in a more and more ardent way, but the [resolve] of Your Majesty to appoint him equally became harder and harder, this certainly is general knowledge of the people in the realm. I have only seen them decline appointments many, many times, and have not witnessed that they usurp power and covet positions. When Your Majesty firmly did not allow them to decline an appointment, only then did they dare to accept the order, but again would not dare to do anything else other than that.⁵⁴²

This refers to what we have seen several times so far: the fear of the emperor for his own status and power, which, according to one of the earlier passages, together with the accusation of factionalism, was used by the bad elements to oust the good people at court. Here, Ouyang Xiu laid out the arguments against this charge, and for Fan Zhongyan's sincerity: had he not declined the positions offered to him in the strongest possible way? How could anyone claim that such a person was usurping power? Declining positions of course was a normal part of court etiquette, but we have seen above that Fan Zhongyan and the others indeed went above and beyond what ritual required. It is very likely that Fan Zhongyan and Han Qi indeed had no intention to leave the border, where they could make a real impact and implement their ideas about how to deal with the 'barbarians', for a position at court, when it was rather questionable that they would be able to make any impact there. It is possible that they to some extent were forced and cajoled by Renzong to come to court, and to formulate their program, yet the act of being forced in this way already provided them with the desired recognition and public leverage. Therefore, however, even the modesty they displayed could be interpreted as motivated by their desire for power, and in fact there is an episode in 1044, where, in response to Fan Zhongyan's offer to resign, the chancellor Zhang Dexiang allegedly advised the emperor to at first deny the request, to avoid being seen as dismissing wise ministers. When the vice chancellor handed in a note to thank the emperor for his kindness, rather than insisting on his resignation, his insincerity would be made

⁵⁴² CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3765.

apparent, and he could be dismissed for good. This, indeed, Fan did, and in this way his enemies attacked him precisely at his core public claim: that he was sincere in his statements and actions.⁵⁴³

In other words, it is less the argument the text makes about the good men's modesty, but rather that about the emperor's role in their downfall that is of interest for our analysis. We have argued above that the political ups and downs of the thirties between Lü Yijian and Fan Zhongyan can be explained by a personnel policy that on one hand tried to create the impression of a harmonic court, without open factional strife, but on the other also was weary of giving too much public power and hidden influence to a single group or official, and attempted to neutralize or at least balance these influences. Therefore it is credible that, although with some delay, the public illustration of Lü Yijian's faction by Fan Zhongyan indeed did constitute a factor in Lü's downfall in 1037, although a dispute with fellow chancellor Wang Zeng was given as the immediate reason.⁵⁴⁴ Whoever was behind it, the famous question about whether or not good factions existed, and the response of the 'good men' that vied for imperial recognition as such, provided a credible argument for such an accumulation of power and subsequent infringement on the emperor's status, especially with the background of the core measures of the program, as well as the public attacks on real or imagined opponents that also could be given a very negative, factional spin. Ouyang Xiu goes on:

Your Majesty wished them to formulate [state] policies, and consequently you opened the Hall of Heavenly Manifestations; you summoned them there for an audience, offering them a seat, and handing them brush and paper to make them write their memorial in his presence. But the majority of people declined and did not dare to lower the

⁵⁴³ CB. vol. 6, j. 154, p. 3740.

⁵⁴⁴ CB. vol. 5, j. 120, p. 2826. McGrath sees a connection: McGrath, "The Reigns of Jen-Tsung and Ying-Tsung." p. 298.

brush [write], Fu Bi and the others also did not dare to be the only ones to make a suggestion. Consequently Your even more troubled Majesty issued a handwritten edict, which addressed [them by] their full name, calling on them exclusively to list the great matters [of state] item by item, and implementing them over the long term, with the expectation that all of them would take effect. Although the character of Fu Bi was keen, he nevertheless still did not dare to put forth a suggestion all by himself, instead he cited precedents of previous rulers (祖宗故事),⁵⁴⁵ asking the emperor to choose and implement them.⁵⁴⁶

One last time, Ouyang Xiu reminds the emperor that he had chosen them and given them the cachet of being singled out to give advice, and have their ideas implemented. Yet, even in this position as favored courtiers, the ‘good men’ supposedly had not just offered their own opinion (maybe read: revive antiquity, *fugu* 復古), but instead had carefully and modestly based their suggestions and argument on historic *and* ancient precedents. This is a contention that to some degree is corroborated by the observation made above that most of the texts related to the program provide a relatively reticent argument and diverse reasoning by the ‘good men’s’ standards.

Since antiquity ruler and ministers have assembled, and once the debate had come to an agreement (literally ‘once words and the Way were in accord/united with each other’), when one encountered the situation, it then was implemented, and there would be no more delay and evasion. Fu Bi and the others received appointments [on account of] Your Majesty’s own decision, they were urged on and exhorted in the strongest fashion, but [you] still were dragging your feet and doubted yourself, [and so the ‘good men’] formulating policies did not have any practical effect; instead the lesser men used the opportunity for their slander, and said that they (the good men) were usurping power, how is this not a false accusation?⁵⁴⁷

Above, we have seen Ouyang Xiu praise the modest suggestions that his associates had made, but here it is the other side, the next step of good government, decisive action (*youwei*), that he highlights. Together with the account of the emperor’s previous lavish endorsement, it becomes a rather open critique of his procrastination and second thoughts, which prevented the program from having any effect on the ground. Instead, this reluctant attitude, especially after the ‘faction’

⁵⁴⁵ Drawing on a quotation by Fan Zhongyan, HYDCD glosses this as 指先代帝王辦事的舊例 (HYDCD. vol. 7, p. 844).

⁵⁴⁶ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3765.

⁵⁴⁷ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3765.

question, had sent the message to the bad elements that instigated them to start their attack, and stop the whole effort. Time and again we come back to the role of the emperor, both in actively discerning good and bad men, and in giving the ostentatious support to those he had chosen in this way. We have seen that it is questionable that there was actually much of a debate on the program by anyone who was not associated with the ‘good men’ in one way or the other, and the general reluctance to speak up that was reported by Ouyang Xiu seems to corroborate that to some extent. Yet, the pivotal role of the emperor in Ouyang Xiu’s analysis of the downfall of the ‘good men’ is worth stressing, because in all likelihood it hits the nail on the head. Again, this is not to say that Renzong had no agency in this matter, this is not the part of Ouyang Xiu’s argument that we should follow, there is just no indication that the emperor ever had bought into the central premise of the ‘good men’, of decisive action and getting the right men, that is, them and their kind.

While in the absence of positive, direct testimony about his motives for promoting and endorsing the ‘good men’ any statement about them must remain speculative, we have seen circumstantial evidence for the following hypothesis: Renzong had supported and endorsed the good men and demanded their program-making because it appeared opportune to do so at this moment, to harness the public appraisal after Fan Zhongyan’s military successes for his purposes, to display harmony at court and disseminate his good government domestically at a time when this was under threat by rebellions and robbers, and maybe also to make some headway with the practical problems, regarding the finances and the military, that plagued the times, but really were quite removed from his imagination. In fact, it would make perfect sense that under these circumstances, Renzong would give priority to a peace proposal from the Xi Xia without much

regard for the ritual and financial details of it, just to come closer to *taiping*, great peace, as a public representation of his good rule, a plan that, again, was in complete opposition to what the ‘good men’ had in mind, and therefore could be part of the explanation why Fan Zhongyan and the others were removed from the border, and put in a position where they were unable to influence the proceedings.

Ouyang Xiu touched on that subject as well, because the memorial draws on their opposition to the peace with Xi Xia, as well as the new peace treaty with the Qidan, as more evidence that the ‘good men’ in fact in no way planned to take anything away from imperial power and the respect towards the emperor, since even in this question it was their ultimate goal to get the ‘barbarians’ to show that respect. At the same time this also is a strong critique of the emperor’s position on the question, so direct that it did not take any recourse to ‘bad advisors’ or the like, which would have misled the emperor, although it did assume that Renzong had a practical argument for his erroneous decision.

I humbly think that Your Majesty is far sighted and intelligent, you have the sagacity of assessing people, what the ministers below can or cannot do, you understand thoroughly without fail, for this reason you, from among the thousands of officials and ministers, have personally selected these few people; [now,] in a very short time they resigned and were removed, causing the group of evil elements inside the country to congratulate each other, and the four barbarians to congratulate each other outside of it, this is why I feel sorry on behalf of Your Majesty.

Your Majesty’s virtue is benevolence and kindness, you look after the loyal and good, [even] at the time they retreat, your kindness and courtesy are abundant; today, Fan Zhongyan’s appointment of four circuits also is not unimportant. I wish that Your Majesty would refuse the slander of the [evil] group, would trust him without doubt, letting him bring to an end what he does, that could be beneficial just as well. Nowadays the two enemies in the West and North, have not yet ended their own conflict, in fact heaven has bestowed on Your Majesty the time to order and build [your defenses], but how can one place Fu Bi and Han Qi in positions that are devoid of any significance? I humbly hope that one as early as possible would recognize the slander and craftiness, and out of order would bestow a planning rank (that is, an official rank with a planning function); that would be extremely fortuitous indeed.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁸ CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3766.

The memorial ends with the by now familiar plea that it was his duty as censorial official to speak up in the face of the mistake that the emperor was about to make. As was to be expected, there was no reply; Ouyang Xiu's attempt to exonerate his friends and get them reinstated into important positions, or at least be allowed to finish their work in the provinces, was in vain, the 'good men' had lost the battle this time. Yet, they, too, eventually did profit from what they had severely criticized in Renzong's personnel policy, that is, the fact that he declined to take a side permanently, and without fail would reinstate officials he ousted after some time; in this case after some ten years Fu Bi, Ouyang Xiu, and Han Qi between 1056 and 1057 returned to influential court positions as elder statesmen, a return which, however, was too late for Fan Zhongyan, who died in 1052. On the other hand the remaining 'good men' had drawn their own conclusions, and did not make another overt and coherent attempt at comprehensive reform during their next stint in government, and it also does not seem that the emperor wanted them to do so. It will be the goal of the next part to answer the question in more detail how the 'good men' of *qingli*, as well as the next generation, would react to the political failure of the reforms.

Conclusions to Part I

In our discussion of the *qingli* 'good men' and their project, we have argued that their main goal was for the emperor and the administration to recognize 'good men' like them and bring them into government positions. In essence, the 'program' that they published was supposed to achieve this goal by way of changing the institutional fabric to make sure that this happened on all levels of the administration, and as such promised to have the widest impact possible. Our understanding of this project would remain incomplete, however, if we were to limit our

discussion to the reform program and the institutional aspect of the reforms as such; in fact, a whole range of expressions and acts, such as public statements and exhortations, but also deferrals of the positions given to them, and declining to make the grand proclamation that was demanded, all were supposed to achieve the same goal in a more limited, but in fact more important way, for it attempted and succeeded in cajoling the emperor into giving core reformers the recognition necessary to get the larger project going, and for the time being, namely between 9/1043 and 4/1044, made any covert and overt resistance against them appear futile. Judging by numerous statements, bringing ‘good men’ into government was the main focus of this political association, and the remaining points of the program regarding the military and the finances were probably chiefly motivated by the demands for a coherent, all-encompassing program made by the emperor, and remained measures of a secondary and stopgap nature, which even in the eyes of supporters fell short of achieving much of an improvement in these areas; Wang Anshi would later take that criticism to heart, and ascribe measures of this kind a higher priority during his reforms, precisely because it was easier to demonstrate successes in these areas. At this point, however, military and the finances did not have the same importance for the core *qingli* reformers, because according to Ouyang Xiu’s ‘On Fundamentals’ it was necessary to first make sure that a good reputation received the recognition that it deserved, and in this way solve the issue of not getting the right men in politics; only then could the other problems be addressed. This larger goal also explains Fan Zhongyan’s outright recognition of the phenomenon of ‘good factions’ when he was prompted to do so, rather than assuming a blunder on his part; admitting to being a good faction and getting imperial approval for that was another way of gaining the official recognition of the emperor that had allowed them to get into that position in the first place. From the perspective of the ‘good men’, this did not amount to ideological coherence or a

factional takeover, and instead merely was supposed to make sure that positions were filled in the meritocratic and selective way that they should be, with ‘good men’. For someone who remained unconvinced and on the outside of their circle, however, it could be interpreted as one faction attempting to bring in their members and occupy core government positions. Either on his own accord, or on the instigation of other actors, the emperor feared for his sovereignty and the balance of power at court, and ended the experiment in a drawn out and yet decisive process that ensured that the ‘good men’ would not come back to power any time soon.

To lead over to the next part, it suffices to conclude that Fan Zhongyan, Fu Bi, Han Qi, and especially Ouyang Xiu in their defeat had put an idea out there, an idea about how literary form and content, institutions and norms, political performance and action, as well as ritual and sincerity should and could be connected in a more direct, normatively better way.⁵⁴⁹ They had shown to the world how to be a good official, and how to conduct, make public, and in fact all but celebrate social and intellectual relationships with other literati. In the ideal, it was part of this culture to disagree and debate with each other in good faith about the best ways to solve the general crisis, as well as the particular problems that the dynasty faced, without leading to permanent rifts we know of between those who and recognized each other as ‘good men’. This, however, does not mean that debates were not in deed as well as in words conducted in a fierce and exclusive way when it counted in their opinion, certainly towards those literati that found

⁵⁴⁹ Ascribing a pivotal role in the development of literati culture, or *wen*, to Ouyang Xiu and what we have called the ‘good men’ is not a new idea, of course, in fact it goes back to attempts of the ‘good men’ themselves to put a positive spin on their situation after *qingli*: Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 188. See also: “The Sung Context.” p. 28-30, 33. However, in light of what we have seen above, the nature of this influence, as well as what Ouyang Xiu argued for, needs to be reconsidered; it seems to me, for example, that Ouyang Xiu’s vision of ritual is more a subjunctive “single, integrated order” (Bol, “The Sung Context.” p. 30), rather than a ‘real’ one, and as such much more diverse and ambiguous than that concept would suggest.

themselves more at the fringes, or outside of the group of ‘good men’; we have seen that certain radical ideas about what to reform and how to do it had been purposefully excluded from the political endeavor, despite the fact that their authors were part of the social group we also have called by that name. Especially in the 1030s, Fan Zhongyan had attacked Lü Yijian viciously, and while he himself seems to have taken a more moderate stance during *qingli*, his younger associates took up his fight against real and imagined enemies. Therefore it indeed is also true that the ‘good men’, and especially the four most famous reformers, had created or collected from historical precedent the ‘common language’ against their political opponents, as well as the political performances and acts that would ‘divide’ the future generations, into a lexicon of expressions and actions that the new generation of literati eagerly took up and included into their repertoire.⁵⁵⁰ It is only when fully recognizing the ambiguities in their social and political statements and relationships that we see that not only did this same language have an inclusive aspect to it, but that the resulting social network did not look anything like the clearly defined, unambiguous factions that we would expect to see. However, this is not an anomaly, and instead goes a long way to explain the success that they did have, for despite the fact that Fan Zhongyan and his associates did finally have to submit to the ultimate power of the sovereign and give up the institutional attempt at reform, it is remarkable how much influence and (‘soft’) power they could accrue in this way, by keeping relationships ambiguous, while at the same time ‘speaking out’ ‘without bias’; the following years would prove them right in their repeated emphasis on gaining a ‘good’ reputation, the one aspect of their project that was not under exclusive control by the emperor. Thus despite their political failure, the *qingli* reforms, but more importantly, the

⁵⁵⁰ Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 162-163. James T.C. Liu already had made the point that Ouyang Xiu’s conduct and success as censor had been emulated by others later to get ahead themselves. Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 60-61.

way that the ‘good men’ had argued for their cause, for literati thus inclined had established the public sphere as a conduit for and device in their normative arguments, as well as a very concrete way to become known and establish themselves as *shi*; in this way one could say that one of the core reform demands of the ‘good men’ was implemented in spite of Renzong’s resistance: that men who acted like they did should by rights be recognized by other literati as good men, and that esteeming and seeking this reputation, instead of being a priori labeled as insincere, had become an important mechanism to bring like-minded, good people into important positions and government office.

Yet, on the other side the failed attempt at institutional reform in *qingli* certainly also caused a crisis, not just politically, but also intellectually. What concrete criticism of core measures was expressed by non-associates after their downfall sounds not implausible, given the circumstances we have described in this part: according to one detractor, the demand for recommendations to get promoted forced the lower officials to jockey for the attention of the powerful;⁵⁵¹ one minister complained that it was actually quite hard to grade the essays and policy questions effectively and objectively, with the old system of strict formal criteria for poetry it was easier to come to a conclusion on the ranking of the candidates, probably the main reason why the poetry exams had been put first originally.⁵⁵² It turned out to be no easy feat to find and judge good men with any degree of certainty in a political environment (as opposed to a literary circle), as Fan Zhongyan and company had learned the hard way with their choice of inspectors and subordinate officials, and as a later anecdote shows: it recounts how a candidate who was initially failed by Ouyang

⁵⁵¹ CB. vol. 6, j. 154, p. 3744. This led to the abolishment of this measure.

⁵⁵² CB. vol. 7, j. 155, p. 3761. Again, this led to the abolishment of the reform measures.

Xiu, because he hated the candidate's style, managed to get a passing grade with an alias and by changing his *wen*, thereby demonstrating that it was possible to 'fake' what Ouyang Xiu was looking for.⁵⁵³ With the renewed ban against factionalism it also had turned out to be dangerous to be too publicly too close to other 'good' men, which, as they had said, must have had an impact on how literati acted that went beyond merely dropping the word 'faction', an impact that was likely to affect the nature of the network of relationships that the 'good men' had still enjoyed in *qingli*. More generally, their successful rise to fame brought with it another problem: since 'being a good person' was rather vague and unpredictable in its practical implications, it attracted hangers on, and there are anecdotes that recount how officials tried to gain the support of the 'good men' by recommending them and attaching themselves to this group, only to be thwarted in their attempts and turning against their associates as a consequence.⁵⁵⁴

There were essentially two ways of analyzing this crisis, aside from blaming it all on outside factors: one way was to criticize the empty rhetoric of some reformers and the radical demands and exclusive moves they made, which Ouyang Xiu himself seemed to do when he in a memorial pointed to these tendencies as the 'problem of *qingli* learning'.

As to the talent and conduct, if it is not examined (*jian* 見) on the basis of how someone manages government affairs, then [people] stick to how it always has been done and follow the old routine, and there will be no one to stick out from the crowd. If one wished to stick out from the crowd [in this situation], then one would inevitably have to act in an eccentric and uncommon way in order to gain a reputation of virtue and conduct, and talk in an ingenuous and

⁵⁵³ *Mengqi bitan* 夢溪筆談 (online version). Scripta Sinica. j. 9, p. 344. (equivalent to Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju 1060). Ouyang Xiu himself, however, in principle exhibited a good sense for this problem with the education system, in fact as late as 1056 he criticized precisely that it was hard to really recognize a candidate's virtue in this way, knowing him only for a short time and without his social environment, and suggested (again) that education should be decentralized to remedy that problem. 議學狀. QSW. vol. 32, j. 689, p. 281-283.

⁵⁵⁴ Such as one regarding Wang Su in 8/1056, already a censor with Ouyang Xiu et al. in *qingli*, who allegedly now sang the praises of Fu Bi in the hope of a promotion, and slandered him when this did not materialize. CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4436. In a different, earlier one, a certain Cai Ting supported Fan et al. in their policies, but one could not ascertain his 'real' state of mind, and allegedly he secretly leaked things to Lü Yijian (CB. vol. 6, j. 151, p. 3666).

empty way in order to be praised as able and knowledgeable. Previously, the problem with/for the learning of *qingli* was exactly that.⁵⁵⁵

It is not quite clear if he was including himself and the polemic memorials he wrote as part of the ‘problem’, but the fact that he eulogized Fan Zhongyan as the impartial, non-dogmatic reformer who even worked with or defended his enemies if it served the common weal shows that he did not extend this radicalism to the reform effort as a whole, or its leader; in fact, if it indeed was a criticism, it is likely that it was directed against certain elements, such as Shi Jie, which Fan had already tried to exclude at the time. As we shall see in the next part, after Ouyang Xiu returned to court, he resumed his outspoken public attacks on people, arguing against Jia Changchao’s promotion in a way that showed no sign of being more courteous than his attacks on Lü Yijian in *qingli*, which suggests that he had not fundamentally changed his mind on this issue of public attacks.⁵⁵⁶ We also should not forget that the audience of this memorial is the same emperor who had criticized the ‘good men’ for their reputation seeking from the beginning, and that Ouyang Xiu here was calling for a remedy of the problems of education that was very much in line with what had been suggested during *qingli*, in fact lauding the school reform that had been attempted and then undone. Moreover, Ouyang Xiu here starts out by putting some blame on the political culture for being a problem *for* the *qingli* protagonists, since it did not consider how literati managed government affairs when determining their talent, something that according to the old *qingli* argument would be possible with policy essays; implicitly, he thus deflects at least some blame back to the political culture, and the emperor himself, because under the current circumstances, people who wanted to be different from the crowd “inevitably had to” resort to

⁵⁵⁵ 議學狀. QSW. vol. 32, j. 689, p. 282.

⁵⁵⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 184, p. 4452-4454. One of the criticisms was that Jia was unable to make a public argument, *gong lun* 公論.

empty rhetoric and ostentatious acts to make a name for themselves, and get the opportunity to change the old ways. In other words, rather than reading it only as regret about how the reformers had conducted themselves, this passage could just as well be interpreted as an analysis of the *qingli* predicament along the lines that we have described above, namely a political situation in which their ostentatious and divisive public acts appeared to be the only way to be heard and make some leeway towards their goal of returning to antiquity, while reconnecting political form as much as possible with moral content.

The other option was to come to the conclusion that the reformers in the implementation of their ideas had not been radical enough, and that many of the problems they encountered, many of the ambiguities they created, could have been avoided by taking their call to take a side to the next, more radical level, and by being more exclusive in their relationships and judgments; in other words, by being more sincere than the reformers had been. The *qingli* group in all their demands for more sincerity still had allowed for a relatively loose connection between the two sides of the dualities, in which form and content, *wen* and *dao*, ritual and sincerity remained separate, independent entities, but now the order of the day was to find ways to make this connection more direct and less ambiguous, with the normative content taking precedence over the form that was supposed to convey it. It will be one task of the next part to show that this did not automatically mean that literati who in different ways came to this conclusion would instantly and openly turn against the *qingli* ‘good men’, or against each other, but it did have one profound consequence for their intellectual *Weltbild*, and also for the use of social ritual in their relationships: while *li* in the sense defined by Ouyang Xiu et al. had been an integrating part of the way the *qingli* ‘good men’ organized their relationships, it now largely lost this integrating potential, because it had

either taken on a different meaning, as a mere extension or component of the Way, or indeed failed to retain much meaning at all in these new versions of the sincerity claim. We will see in the second chapter of the following part how this shift affected the writings about ritual of one important actor, Sima Guang, but the so called *puyi* debate that will take up the best part of Part II, concerning the ritual title for emperor Yingzong's biological father, will exemplify this shift on a larger scale, because in the two arguments that were offered the two fundamentally different positions on ritual became fully apparent.

Part II. A house divided – old and new ‘good men’ between cooperation and dispute 1057–1067

The protracted dispute known as *puyi* 濮議, which between 1064 and 1066 would overshadow the best part of Emperor Yingzong’s short reign, concerned the correct ritual address of the adopted Emperor Yingzong’s natural father, the eponymous Prince of Pu, and his wives, as well as the ritual best suitable for their natural son to uphold their memory.⁵⁵⁷ Considered one of the precursors to the clash of factions yet to come in *xining*, it certainly exhibited the full range of divisive behavior and ‘language’ that we have encountered in the previous part, and would see later on a much larger scale, that is, the angry, accusatory memorials by officials accusing the leading, ‘evil’ ministers to have misled the emperor, and the subsequent dismissals of such officials to provincial posts. What makes this case interesting for our larger goal of defining the nature of factions and factionalism, among others, is that this time two of the main protagonists of the *qingli* ‘good men’, Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi, were on the receiving end of the accusations, and were called on to resign for their evil behavior in terms that were very much reminiscent of their own rhetoric against Lü Yijian and other evil officials at the time that Ouyang Xiu had been a remonstrance official. One argument for pre-existing factional divides would be the fact that with Lü Gongzhu one of Lü’s sons was among those who opposed the ‘good men’, which, together with the known conservative outlook of the opposition leader, Sima Guang, would make this a clear-cut case of conservatives going against the reform faction.⁵⁵⁸ Yet, we have already

⁵⁵⁷ The actual dispute took place between 1065 and 1066; however, there are pertinent events, such as the first document staking out the government’s claims, which date to 1064. This will be discussed below.

⁵⁵⁸ Note that with Han Wei another son of a prominent politician of the early Renzong reign, Han Yi, would be on the side of the opposition censors protesting against their dismissal; Han Yi had publicly disassociated himself from Fan Zhongyan earlier (CB. vol. 5, j. 118, p. 2784), and had been attacked by Han Qi (CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2862).

seen earlier that it is actually quite hard to pinpoint a coherent ‘conservative’ faction, and that both the dynamics and ideological diversity within the ‘good men’, as well as their interaction with officials perceived as enemies demanded a much more complex narrative than that of two or more clearly defined ‘parties’. Nevertheless, it still was possible to conclude that the ‘good men’ indeed had formed a political faction with common, if somewhat limited, political goals in its core group, and a less clearly defined, but much broader outreach beyond that group through the means of social ritual. By and large the group survived their disagreements and political defeat brought on them by the emperor withdrawing his support, a fact that we have attributed in part to the ritual aspect of their interaction. The nondescript nature of the moniker ‘good man’, and various other forms of similar praise and recognition that they had in their social repertoire made it possible to extend the social circle that we have called the ‘good men’ both in time and in scope, through differences of opinion and even across deep political divides. In fact, at the end of the day this social ritual could even be extended to political enemies, such as Lü Yijian, as we saw in Fan Zhongyan’s note of mourning for what supposedly was his enemy.

What makes the case of the *puyi* dispute so difficult to interpret is that Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi before had also practiced social ritual with the sons of his former enemies, Lü Gongzhu and Han Wei, whom they recommended for office, respectively; Ouyang Xiu also exchanged letters with Lü Gongzhu, Han Wei, and his brother Han Jiang.⁵⁵⁹ For all intents and purposes, therefore, these officials had become part of the extended group of ‘good men’, while other brothers of the

⁵⁵⁹ 舉呂公著自代狀 (1059). QSW. vol. 32, j. 647, p. 10; for Wang Anshi 王安石 and Lü Gongzhu 呂公著 (1054–55): QSW. vol. 32, j. 687, p. 252; Han Qi for Lü Xiaqing 呂夏卿 and Han Wei 韓維 (1063/7): QSW. vol. 39, j. 849, p. 293; Ouyang Xiu’s letters to Lü Gongzhu (earliest 1050, remainder *xining*): QSW. vol. 33, j. 705, p. 213–215. Ouyang Xiu letter to Han Wei, mentioning Wang Anshi (1055): QSW. vol. 33, j. 706, p. 227; to Wei’s brother Han Jiang (1059): p. 226–227.

Lü family had not. Both Lü Gongzhu and Han Wei, however, would end up on the other side of the debate called *puyi*. Moreover, this absence of clear fault lines between the two sides prior to the actual debate was not just limited to the social realm, as a political cooperation between several later *puyi* opponents and Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu in the 1050s and 1060s will show, during which these and other officials conducted a public campaign to persuade the hitherto heirless emperor to adopt a successor, a campaign that will be the topic of Chapter 3. Yet, for what might seem to be a relatively unimportant ritual question, these political and social ties were broken, and what is more, even the son of their former ally Fan Zhongyan, Chunren, found himself on the other side of the debate, to the disappointment of Han Qi.⁵⁶⁰ In other words, rather than a clash between structurally pre-existing factions, *puyi* seems to mark a process of social division among *one* socio-political group, a group that, however, must be defined along the much looser lines that allowed us to call the ‘good men’ of *qingli* a faction.

This part of the dissertation aims to address this puzzle by means of two approaches. Firstly, it outlines in some depth the political constellation and the position of this new group of ‘good men’ at the eve of the Yingzong reign, and over its course (Chapters 3 and 4), so as to provide a backdrop for the subsequent discussion in Chapter 5 of the two very different ideas of ritual that came to light in the debate. Once more, the argument made will be somewhat paradoxical, while intricately tied to what has been said about the *qingli* reform: due to an unforeseeable change of political fortunes, what hitherto had been inconsequential ideological differences turned into the divisive factor that exacerbated the already visible political divide within the same group of officials. This group originally had worked together to achieve one immediate political success

⁵⁶⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5033. As we have seen above, Ouyang Xiu had had his problems with Fan Chunren earlier.

in pursuit of broader, common goals that were a consequence of, and, as we shall see, very much connected to the *qingli* experience. It is precisely the fact that they originally perceived themselves to be on the same side, working for similar, if not the same ‘good’ goals, that turned the dispute into a bitter feud, and led the participants, and especially the censors Lü Hui 呂誨 (1014–1071), Fan Chunren, and Lü Dafang 呂大防 (1027–1097), to roll out all the elements and language of factionalism that we already have seen before and during *qingli*, only that this time they were directed at former associates, who were perceived as betraying the general normative ideas that they themselves had propagated earlier. This finding is in stark contrast to the structural explanations for factionalism discussed in the introduction, which assume as a rule that pre-existing social networks, with largely fixed, conflicting ideals and interests, were pitted against each other in these disputes. To make this structuralist idea of factions work, it is necessary to assume that social relationships always have a deeper meaning (ideas, interest, relation), or vice-versa, that instances of social ritual that have no apparent deeper meaning, such as Fan Zhongyan’s mourning note for Lü Yijian, and the exchange between Sima Guang and Wang Anshi, to name the extreme cases, are insignificant and can be discarded from consideration.

The second, intellectual approach taken in this part, centering on the framework of ritual and sincerity introduced above, then allows us to talk about all of these different relationships in a nuanced way, and ascribe significance to each of them, without having to go too far in the other direction by assuming that they always have a deeper meaning beyond the immediate exchange. In this view, accepting the ambiguity of these contacts and ritual acts as such is key to understanding them and recognizing their inherent strength, what used to be clearly defined,

exclusive groups with firm relationships becomes a larger network where even ambiguous and changeable relationships on the periphery are significant, and in this case allow us to recognize a socio-political network where none was visible before, just because we hitherto have let ourselves be distracted by the demand for deeper meaning and firm structure.

The narrative of this complex development from being a group of ‘good men’ to opposing each other will begin in Chapter 2 with the case of Sima Guang, and his ambiguous and faint, but measurable relationship to the *qingli* reforms and its protagonists, both socially and intellectually; revisiting our benchmark of ideas on ritual we will see how Sima Guang drew on earlier visions of *li* we have discussed above when phrasing his own ideas, ideas that were already markedly different, but still within the range of how ‘good men’ could perceive ritual. As we will see in Chapter 3, these differences in ideas certainly were no obstacle to political cooperation. As far as we can tell it was only the political dispute that ended this cooperation, which led Sima Guang to radicalize his view on the topic, and offer a fundamentally different definition of what ritual meant for him, as opposed to what it had meant and how it had functioned for the *qingli* ‘good men’. Yet, before delving into those developments, the next chapter should provide some empirical and qualitative underpinning to what only remained a claim in the previous part’s conclusion, namely that Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu, Han Qi, and Fu Bi were actually quite successful in turning their publicly held tenets into articles of faith shared by many 11th-century literati, claims about the basic fact that *wen* and *dao* can and should be connected, the role of public proceedings and debates in getting to the right decisions, as well as about who should be chosen, how one should act, and what one should learn and do as a member of officialdom. I will argue in the following chapter that this was the continuation of the *qingli* reforms with non-

institutional means, and as such had a wider impact and was more successful than the original reform had been.

Chapter 1. Disseminating the ideas of ‘good men’: the rise of ‘sincerity’ and the ideal of public sphere, and its divisive potential in the last years of Renzong

While Ouyang Xiu failed to make an explicit reference to Fan Zhongyan in it, an undated essay on the Han Dynasty official Jia Yi 賈誼 (200 BCE?–169 BCE?) appears to support the argument to be made in this chapter, namely that despite their political defeat, and in fact partially because of it, the ‘good men’ exercised a lasting influence on literati society and politics in the 11th century. In the essay, Ouyang discusses the fact that, while never being made a high minister and dying in a humble position away from court, the writings and political advice of Jia Yi still had a lasting impact on the Han Dynasty, and in fact many of his suggestions were by and large implemented later.⁵⁶¹ Likewise, Fan Zhongyan had died away from court, but his ideas lived on among a new generation of literati that had witnessed his and his associates’ efforts at political reform and public debate. Indeed, the very fact that in the late 1050s we now have a different kind of discussion culture shows that these ideas and ideals had become much more widespread: during *qingli* we have seen that the discussants in a given debate were all part of a group that was diverse and ambiguous, but still could be loosely defined against other literati by a duality of common, if general, norms and social ritual, whereby good men that were too radical could be part of the social circle, but remained excluded from the political one; at the end of the day the

⁵⁶¹ QSW. vol. 35, j. 734, p. 30-31.

topics of these at times heated discussions had been quite circumscribed, and actual ad hominem attacks limited to ‘others’ who remained largely silent. For the discussions of the late Renzong era it is even harder to define these circles and groups among all the different public opinions, statements, and attacks, despite the aid of our duality that allows us to catch the nuances and ambiguities. As we shall see, there is still some common ground between them politically, but the ‘good men’ had become more inclusive and diverse, encompassing a considerable part of officialdom one way or another. However, this enlargement and diversification came at the price of fiercer debates, and more ad hominem attacks between debaters. The so-called *puyi* only is the most prominent example among the heated disputes that we see going on in this period.

One way of making the dissemination of *qingli* ideas visible in a rather broad fashion is to look at certain words and expressions tied to the ‘good men’s’ way of arguing and doing politics, but also to their preference for direct, public interaction at court and with each other, and see how often they appear at different times in the *Changbian*; when doing this for such general and yet telling terms such as ‘road of remonstrance’ *yanlu* 言路, ‘to talk about [political] matters’ *yanshi* 言事, etc., then we see that after *qingli* these terms were used more frequently in the narrative, and that the early Renzong reign by this measure indeed seems to have been relatively less ‘public’, even when compared to the preceding Zhenzong era.

Table 2	Taizu/Taizong 960–997	Zhenzong 997–1022	Renzong pre- <i>qingli</i> 1022–1040	Renzong post- <i>qingli</i> 1041–1063	Yingz. 1063– 1067	<i>xining</i> 1068– 1077	<i>yuanfeng</i> 1078– 1085	<i>yuanyou</i> 1 1086
years	15/22	25	18 [11 under reg.]	23	4 [1]	10	8	1
<i>juan</i>	17/25	57	30	70	10	77	77	30
occurrence								
公議	1	6	5	17	12	20	25	140
言路	4	9	4	17	8	13	34	56
言事	2/23	48	29	122	22	100	65	70
至誠	0/3	6	2	16	5	10	13	17

As we see, terms connected to publicness would increase even more under Yingzong and Shenzong, and would be most often recorded for the debates of the early *yuanyou*-period, with some nuances between the different words. On a much smaller scale the use of the term ‘utmost sincerity’ (*zhicheng* 至誠) takes a similar development, and also appears to be most often used in that one year of 1086. One should not overinterpret this data as giving evidence to the objective presence of a ‘public sphere’ in Habermas’ normative sense that we have recognized as elusive in the introduction, mostly because we will point to the problems that came with this change here as well, but it still marks a development in which these terms became more and more important and their use more widespread among literati as a whole. In other words, the public sphere whose limited existence in the face of conceptual difficulties we have described in the last part had expanded, if only in the equally limited sense that as an idea and normative demand it had spread beyond the already diverse group we have called the *qingli* ‘good men’. One potential problem with that argument is that part of the increased finding in the sources may be due to improving records, which find an obvious expression in the number of *Changbian juan* for Renzong’s reign pre- and post-*qingli*, respectively, it seems that the regency and early Renzong reign in general is underrepresented in the source compared to other times, and specifically the latter part of Renzong’s reign, for which we again have much more material. Yet, even this development to

some degree seems connected to the reform efforts of the ‘good men’ as well, and their view that for public debates one needed public records: it is one of the less known and less controversial aspects of their reforms that they instigated projects that were supposed to collect and put in order the laws and precedents of the dynasty, as well as the documental archives of different government agencies, which supposedly had been in disarray after the regency. We have seen that idea already in Han Qi’s insistence that the records of the debate about ritual music be kept in order to be revisited in future discussions; here, Fu Bi, right after the ‘good men’ proclaimed their program, makes a much broader argument why good records are important, and incidentally in this way also lays claim to the broader consensus about the importance of history for the legitimacy of the dynasty that Lamouroux has argued for:⁵⁶²

One ordered Wang Zhu, Yu Jing, Sun Fu, and Ouyang Xiu to jointly compile and edit the precedents of the founders. Before that, Vice Commissioner of Military Affairs Fu Bi said: ‘I have in each and every case observed that from antiquity those rulers who provided ordered [government] to all under heaven, without fail would consider the [codified] institutional system as their first and foremost task. When an institutional system has been established, then consequently for the myriad affairs [of government] there are coherent procedures and the administration becomes predictable and dependable. The Song Dynasty has ruled all under heaven for more than 90 years, Taizu started by doing away with the malpractice of the Five Dynasties, and establishing the foundation of the institutional system, Taizong was able to carry on the achievements of his predecessor, and the institutional fabric became more and more sophisticated, Zhenzong inherited the basis for heavenly peace from the two founding emperors, and carefully preserved the established institutions.

Recently the institutional fabric (the records of precedents?) has become very disordered, and it is modified each time an issue comes up, the *liang fu* manages [things] and decides [on a matter], and then it becomes an established precedent. Carrying it out in the realm, everybody thinks it’s a mistake, but the court, unperturbed, complies with the precedent and implements it, and does not consider abolishing it. This causes the strength of the people to be exhausted, the finances to be in deficit, [it causes] the officials to be redundant while still generally not getting [the right] people [for the posts], the way of government becomes lax, and chaos will be the consequence that follows. Rewards and punishments have no standard, evil and upright are not differentiated. Western and Northern [Barbarians] join forces to invade, and insurgents multiply. When the army is sent out without guiding laws, they necessarily will lose their battles, when orders are handed down that are not trustworthy, then the people will not abide by them. This takes many forms, too many to be enumerated in detail. The reason for this must be that the [codified] institutional system is not in place, and this has negative effects on everything else to this extent. I today wish that one were to select officials and establish an office, to take the remaining documents about institutions and precedents of the first three emperors, and to look for texts about what works among what has been implemented by the various offices for a protracted period of time, dividing them into categories and chapters, and compiling it into one book, that would be placed with the two administrations [*liang fu*], so as to serve as [a reference work] for models to emulate. It is to hope that thereby the ruined institutional fabric will be somewhat

⁵⁶² Lamouroux, “Song Renzong’s Court Landscape.” p. 88.

restored, that dysfunctional laws would be gradually abandoned, this is the basis of preserving the foundation and planning the relief from misfortune and chaos.’ The emperor accepted his words, and therefore ordered Jing and the others to compile it, and Fu Bi to lead them. In the following year the book was completed, it was divided by categories, 96 chapters, in 20 *juan*. [...] ⁵⁶³

For the ‘good men’ a good institutional system included reference works of precedents, and archived documents that were ordered and accessible for the officials involved; their availability was a prerequisite for good government, but also for informed debates. As such, compiling these in and by itself was an expression of the increasing value that was placed in informed debates. Yet, here we also see that these projects were not apolitical, in fact, a compendium of precedents compiled by ‘good men’ could serve to keep in check an administrative body, the two administrations, that was only partially under their control at that point. Likewise, we have seen above that the histories that Ouyang Xiu compiled were used to disseminate and argue for his ideas, for example on the nature of factions or associations of ‘good men’.

Between 1055 and 1057, Han Qi, Fu Bi, and Ouyang Xiu once more profited themselves from the fact that Renzong, the ‘humane ancestor’, did not find it in him to oust disgraced officials once and for all, ⁵⁶⁴ something that Shi Jie had termed “petty humaneness”, *xiaoren* 小人, earlier. ⁵⁶⁵ When they returned to court positions, their collection work was renewed and intensified; in one of these instances, Han Qi lamented the fact that the archives of the military commission were in such a bad, worm-ridden state that he could not find important documents

⁵⁶³ CB. vol. 6, j. 143, p. 3455-56. Similar one for the different agencies overseeing personnel administration: CB. vol. 6, j. 146, p. 3550.

⁵⁶⁴ Generally the date is given as 1057, but once again the promotions came in a staggered fashion, and already in 1055–56 Han Qi, Ouyang Xiu, and Fu Bi held important posts and had a growing presence at court with their statements and memorials. Fu Bi had been promoted to the chancellery in 1055, at a time when Ouyang Xiu already held a Hanlin position (CB. vol. 7, j. 180, p. 4353-54). Supposedly these decisions elicited the praise of the literati.

⁵⁶⁵ Skonicki, “Employing the Right Kind of Men.” p. 74-75. QSW. vol. 29, j. 630, p. 343-344.

regarding border disputes with the other states.⁵⁶⁶ While some subjects of peripheral political importance were covered as well, such as medical books,⁵⁶⁷ the political significance of Ouyang Xiu officially handing in a compilation about ritual during the *puyi* debate on ritual was readily apparent to the compilers of the *Changbian*.⁵⁶⁸

Should the above attempt at providing quantitative evidence be found wanting, the qualitative, anecdotal side of the matter may be even more important to demonstrate the outreach of the ‘good men’ themselves, especially of Ouyang Xiu. His correspondence and recommendations place a large number of writers, thinkers, and officials who would become renowned and important over the course of the century in the vicinity of him and the *qingli* ‘good men’, such as the Su and Cheng brothers, Wang Anshi, Lü Huiqing, the Han brothers, and Lü Gongzhu, to

⁵⁶⁶ Han Qi laments the state of documentation for military commission (*Shumiyuan*), and a compilation of important texts is ordered (CB. vol. 8, j. 186, p. 4486-87, another compilation of edicts ordered: p. 4487). Another kind of edict is recorded by the court of academicians, following a suggestion by Ouyang Xiu: CB. vol. 8, j. 187, p. 4514. Ouyang Xiu complains that Li Shu has taken the official history into the palace and burned the drafts, Ouyang Xiu requests to have the *Longtuge* write another copy and hand it down to the history office, of which he was a part (CB. vol. 8, j. 190, p. 4594). Compilation of *Shumiyuan* documents is finished: CB. vol. 8, j. 192, p. 4645. Another compilation of edicts regarding the imperial clan: CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4661. Secret military documents compiled, but the losses were too great to be recovered (CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4666). In 4/1062, Han Qi and others hand in the ‘*jiayou* edicts’ (*chi* 敕) starting *qingli* 4 (1044), ending 1068 (CB. vol. 8, j. 196, p. 4745). Ouyang Xiu asks to amend secret documents from copies held in the palace (CB. vol. 8, j. 196, p. 4763). Wang Gui hands in compiled edicts of the *Shenguan* (CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4861). I am unsure at this point how this relates to the earlier, similar compilation efforts that Lamouroux documents, since it is impossible to assess the veracity of the ‘good men’s’ claims that the records were in disorder given the earlier efforts at compiling them; however, even as mere claims and political statements they are significant, and of course show that the ‘good men’ probably tried to take command of ‘their’ history, and thus have a significant part in compiling it.

⁵⁶⁷ At the same time, Han Qi discussed the lamentable state of the current editions of important medical books (CB. vol. 8, j. 186, p. 4487).

⁵⁶⁸ They recorded the fact, and included a memorial that all but accused the compilers of being unorthodox. However, it is not clear if the exchange recorded between Zhang Gui and Su Xun is actually from the time of *puyi*, since the beginning of the compilation project was in 1061/1062; a compilation on ritual just had an increased significance when handed in at this point (9/1065), when the court discussed a specific one in such a heated fashion. In a nutshell, Zhang Gui asks that upright and learned officials be selected to discuss if the compiled rituals are correct or not, so as to ensure that the compilation fits the classics, whereas Su Xun, who was a participant in the project, assures that the goal of the effort was not to produce a binding codex of ritual, but to collect all information about past ritual stipulation as a documentation and reference for decisions. CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 4996.

name but a few. In other words, Ouyang Xiu still was doing exactly what he had described at different occasions as what the ‘good men’ do: praising and recommending ‘good men’ so that they as a group would become known, rise to prominence, and could better the world.

Notwithstanding the fact that we have somewhat qualified the extent of *qingli* enmities above, it is still remarkable in itself that Ouyang Xiu would include the sons of former enemies in his social circle; yet, it is even more indicative of the draw of his ideals that these sons of enemies would seek him out as mentor and correspondent, and so selectively (not all brothers of Lü Gongzhu are among them) that this is hardly just a consequence of the ‘good men’s’ rise to high position and fame, and the advantages it carried to be acquainted with them.⁵⁶⁹ It is more likely that both Ouyang Xiu and Lü Gongzhu in fact found it in them to recognize each other as ‘good men’, at least in the ritual sense.

While the emperor still would not commit to the ‘good men’ to the extent they wanted to, nor give them another ostentatious opportunity at comprehensive institutional reform, Ouyang Xiu’s return to his majesty’s good graces and important functions at court (as a Hanlin academician) also afforded him the power to continue this practice of recommendations and promotion of the ‘good’ in a much more official and wider setting: in 1057 he administered the civil-service examinations, together with, among others, Han Jiang, as well as Wang Gui 王珪 (1019–1085)

⁵⁶⁹ One more hint that family ties have a secondary role here is the fact that Han Jiang attacked and ousted a brother of Lü Gongzhu, Gongru 呂公孺, in a way that would throw the worst possible light on the Lü family, claiming that Gongru on behalf of another brother, Gongzhuo 呂公綽, extorted money and gifts during the reign of Yijian, and had an illicit relationship with a younger daughter of said brother (CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4567, in response Gongru claims to have been slandered, and asks for an official investigation). Although we have no record of the reaction of Gongzhu, this is not to say that this did not have consequences for the relationship between Lü Gongzhu and the Han brothers at all, (Han Jiang was demoted later as well, for attacking Fu Bi) but the point is that it did not prevent the broader political collaboration that would have Lü Gongzhu and Han Wei end up on the same side in both the succession campaign and the *puyi* debate.

and Fan Zhen 范鎮 (1008–1088), who would go on to play important roles during *puyi* in opposition to Ouyang Xiu’s argument.⁵⁷⁰ The *Changbian* describes Ouyang Xiu’s dissatisfaction with the *wenzhang* of his day, and his determination to suppress the bad developments and be strict about cheating. Supposedly, all those who were praised and promoted by their contemporaries were not among those passed, and subsequently the disappointed candidates gathered in the streets to harass Ouyang Xiu, to the point where the guards and patrol officials had no way of holding them back. Yet, the report’s conclusion was that “from this time on the *wen* style still changed incrementally,”⁵⁷¹ or, in a much less reticent version by Wu Chong, it “changed and returned to the correct.”⁵⁷² This of course is a trope, and it is doubtful if those who passed this exam really were the proverbial unknown recluses from the countryside that the text implicitly refers to, who now came to serve the sagely government. Yet, it can be argued that rarely has there been a trope less exaggerated and hyperbolic, if taken as an indicator of the long-term impact of this occasion: this single examination would bring forth and recognize a considerable number of the most talented and celebrated literati not just of the century, but of Chinese cultural and intellectual history as such: Su Shi, Su Che, Lü Huiqing, Wang Shao 王韶 (1030–1081), Cheng Hao, Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077), Zeng Gong 曾鞏 (1019–1083), and Zeng Bu 曾布 (1036–1107) to name only the most important, would all be passed in this exam. Together with the examiners, literati involved in it included important representatives of both sides in the *puyi* debate, of both proponents and the opponents of the *xining* reforms, and famous

⁵⁷⁰ For a detailed study, see: Zeng, *Wenxing cuican – Bei Song jiayou er nian gongju kaolun*.

⁵⁷¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 185, p. 4467.

⁵⁷² Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 192.

literary figures such as Su Shi.⁵⁷³ With Cheng Hao and Zhang Zai, two pivotal early figures of what would become the *daoxue* movement were also passed, a teaching that would become widespread and popular among literati in Southern Song, due to the efforts by Zhu Xi at creating a coherent canon for learners; it would be declared exam standard under the Yuan, and remain so until 1905. It is true that this was a one-off chance, and that more conventional criteria and demands once again appear to have dominated the next, 1059 exams.⁵⁷⁴ However, in some ways this one instance of having the ‘right’ men administer the exams had a more concrete and imminent impact on ‘good men’ than all the institutional reforms of the *qingli*-era combined, which at the end of the day had accomplished not much more than enhancing and spreading their ‘good’ reputation, as important as that may have been. Despite all safeguards in the examinations against foul play, it would be naïve to think that this outcome was merely a coincidence, and not in one way or the other the result of the conscious efforts, as well as the reputation, of the chief examiner.

In short, despite the problems of judging good or bad men, in a very general sense the *qingli* ideas were spreading and becoming the staple of literati arguments, which last but not least is attested to by a certain Wang Anshi, who in his famous ‘Memorial to Emperor Renzong’ 上仁宗皇帝言事書, later called the *Wan yan shu* 萬言書, would call for social renewal through political reform.⁵⁷⁵ Its content has been discussed before, and in fact there is nothing to add to the general conclusion that the memorial provided a blueprint for the *xining* reforms, in that it laid out a

⁵⁷³ Zeng, *Wenxing cuican*. p. 2.

⁵⁷⁴ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 192-194.

⁵⁷⁵ QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 328-343. Williamson, *Wang An shih*. vol. 1, p. 48-84.

program and the underlying ideas that would guide the later effort. Indeed, it furnished an “idea of a perfect, self-contained, and self-perpetuating system”,⁵⁷⁶ which in many ways expressed Wang Anshi’s original ideology and his very own, specific solution to the problems of the times. However, what so far has been left out in the discussion of this text is the specific context of the late Renzong era in which the memorial was handed in, for the fact that the memorial had no immediate consequences at the time was entirely unintentional.⁵⁷⁷ It has been noted that there is something of a shift, a disconnect between his grand intellectual claims and the much more mundane actual program that he proposes here,⁵⁷⁸ and when distilling from the memorial what practical solutions it called for, as well as the main defects that this program was supposed to counter, we arrive at something that sounds very much like what we have singled out as the core demands of the *qingli* program: the problem was that one did not get the right officials for the posts and tasks on all levels of government, and therefore it was necessary to create a school and education system that would produce good candidates, from among which then the best ones would be selected with the right criteria, that is, less emphasis on rote memorization and more on practical skills; as Smith argues, the difference was that Fan Zhongyan had argued for more general, practical abilities in the diverse areas of expertise that officials had to master, whereas Wang Anshi called for experts in their field, albeit with some universal touches, when it comes to military education, for example;⁵⁷⁹ however, in Wang’s vision as well they would be promoted according to their accomplishments, and pursuant to recommendations from other officials, to

⁵⁷⁶ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 162.

⁵⁷⁷ James T.C. Liu argues that the memorial had no consequences. Liu, *Reform in Song China*. p. 2.

⁵⁷⁸ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 218.

⁵⁷⁹ Smith, “Anatomies of reform.” p. 14.

posts that best suited their talent; strict regulations, but also sufficient salaries would provide the guidance and financial means to ensure that even officials of mediocre talent would toe the line in fulfilling their duties; in a very general way the topics of state finances and the military are also present, in his calls for an education that would include military subjects, and an efficient method to administer the finances; both can and have been argued to ideologically foreshadow his *baojia* and financial policies,⁵⁸⁰ yet, much like in the original ten points, these aspects at this stage still remained peripheral and less well developed. In addition to that, Wang Anshi takes up certain *qingli* keywords, such as the sequence of importance (*benmo xianhou*), public discussion of important policies,⁵⁸¹ and also human sentiments and desires in connection to ritual, which had been the topic of parts 2 and 3 of ‘On Fundamentals’. Yet, this last example shows also that he has deviated from the original: human sentiments and desires here are something that the good ruler must take into account in government, but rather than ritual taking the pivotal role in coming to terms with these in a way that in essence is approaching a non-material subjunctive, as it had with Ouyang Xiu, for Wang Anshi it is but one of three tools for the sage kings to fulfill and control these desires, next to sufficient salaries, and laws and regulations; the explanation given shows that these three were supposed to provide the status and means that men desire in a very material sense, but also to keep them in check and prevent them from acting above their

⁵⁸⁰ It is of course not unjustified to draw a connection between the *Wan yan shu* and economic reform, as Smith does (Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 388), but given the prominence of economic reforms later on, to me it is more surprising that he failed to, or refrained from, spelling these out in more detail in this proclamation of his ideas, and in this memorial limited himself to general claims about the need to get the right men to administer the finances, something that the *qingli* good men could very much agree to.

⁵⁸¹ QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 329. The term *gong* itself appears to have had a positive connotation (p. 328), but Wang subsequently contends that court discussions of government affairs were too concerned with details at the moment, and thus not achieving much, because the grand scheme of things was not discussed (p. 341-342); however, it seems to me that he does not fundamentally question the value of discussion, as his own participation in it would seem to show.

station, that is, spending more means on more lavish rituals than they were entitled to. In other words, the element of subjunctive is entirely absent from his thinking, and there can be no question that the word *jie* that we have seen so often in the previous part in its ambiguous meaning of regulating and connecting, in its reoccurrence in this memorial has entirely shifted to the ‘regulating’ meaning.⁵⁸² Wang Anshi in the course of his argument also invokes the intention of the sages that was so prominent with the good men and their take on ritual, only that Wang Anshi is much more certain that he has figured out this intention, and more willing to draw global, universal conclusions, as opposed to the mostly situational ones of ‘good men’ of *qingli*.⁵⁸³ In many ways, these differences in the details can be extrapolated to the more general differences, that is, the very original way that Wang Anshi frames and changes the *qingli* program to form a coherent system on every level; it appears as if he wanted to outdo the *qingli* reformers in radicalness, coherence, and practical-mindedness, as well as to the extent that he exclusively argued with and for antiquity as the sole source of guidance, an exclusiveness that the good men had largely avoided in their official proclamations (as opposed to the *Benlun*), and had only drawn on once in a memorial arguing for the inspector measure, as far as we know. Yet, the fact remains that when looking for a moment beyond all of these differences, the content of his program at this point is still remarkably *similar* to the essence of the ten points and the hierarchy of the *Benlun*, and as such may both reflect his implicit criticism of the conduct, but not content and thrust, of the earlier reforms, and his desire to be perceived as following in their tradition. Together with the explicit reference he makes to the emperor’s (recent) wise, impartial (公) choice of “high ministers”, which seems to point to Han Qi, Fu Bi, and Ouyang Xiu’s return

⁵⁸² QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 331.

⁵⁸³ QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 329.

in 1056–57, whose employment “all under heaven” desired, and which had been done against the slander of some evil officials,⁵⁸⁴ his memorial is shown to have a very immediate political function. It served not just to promote him and his ideas, but also to provide a public push towards, and to make himself part of, what a lot of observers must have perceived as a renewed effort at reform made by the *qingli* ‘good men’ at this point in the late 1050s. As such, the ‘Memorial to Renzong’ is reminiscent of the writings of earlier ‘good men’ that offered solutions or criticism, but also of Cai Xiang and Shi Jie, who had made their entrance to the group of good men in a similarly public way, if by means of poems and not prose. After all, the practical problems had not become any less pressing since the *qingli*-era.⁵⁸⁵ At the same time, we know from Part I that for Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu there was no reason to openly exclude literati from their circles who voiced more radical ideas than they did, such as Shi Jie, but it is also not a given that these would be promoted to executive, influential posts by them.

The late Renzong period has been characterized as an era of inertia and standstill,⁵⁸⁶ and compared to the ostentatious comprehensiveness of the earlier reforms this certainly was the case, yet, among the clatter of statements and information some traces are visible that give testimony to the fact that the old *qingli* guard in a limited way renewed their reform efforts in an institutional sense as well, aside from merely collecting documents. After Ouyang Xiu’s administration of the exams, an unnamed official in 11/1057 handed in a memorial arguing that one should schedule exams more frequently, every other year, to relieve pressure from the

⁵⁸⁴ QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 328.

⁵⁸⁵ The general, practical problems of the mid to late 11th century are described by McGrath, “The Reigns of Jen-tsung and Ying-tsung.” p. 326-334. Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 350-352.

⁵⁸⁶ McGrath, “The Reigns of Jen-tsung and Ying-tsung.” p. 323-326.

candidates, who, in a system that only held exams every four years, faced tremendous personal and financial consequences if they failed in a given year, but also moral ones if they resorted to fraud. The emperor assented, and the subsequent discussion among officials led to a consensus that suggestions such as this were likely to cut recommendations in half, and thus help ‘refine’ (*jing* 精) how one selected officials, taking up language used in the ‘Ten-Point Memorial’.⁵⁸⁷ Moreover, the corresponding edict, aside from increasing the frequency, increased the number of policy essays (*wuce* 務策) for the *jinshi* and questions of the ‘larger significance’ (*dayi* 大義) type for the *zhuke*-exam, as well as establishing new rules for the *mingjing*-exam that apparently also included policy questions.⁵⁸⁸ This, together with an only slightly later memorial and edict making the selection of academicians more selective and recommenders accountable for their recommendee’s shortcomings,⁵⁸⁹ makes this sound very much like the respective reform proposals that had been made in the ten points, especially if we remind ourselves that there always had been some flexibility and incremental changes in the way the ‘good men’ framed the institutional form that their ideas were translated to. The only difference was that it was not announced in an equally ostentatious, comprehensive way, and not too apparently connected to Ouyang Xiu and the old *qingli* guard, because it was not them that called for these measures. There are instances where the agency of the *qingli* ‘good men’ was more apparent, such as when they made their choices in terms of ‘good’ personnel; to name an example, when Zhang Fangping took up a post in the financial commission, replacing Han Qi after the latter’s promotion, Fu Bi in particular had praised him and his skills at practical administration to the

⁵⁸⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 186, p. 4495-96.

⁵⁸⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 186, p. 4496.

⁵⁸⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 186, p. 4497.

emperor, citing Zhang's successes when managing the treasury and his suggestions about waterways.⁵⁹⁰ At other times, censors were promoted without their apparent interference, such as Bao Zheng, who went on to lament that orders handed down were changed too often, and thus rendered this important instrument of rulership ineffective; Bao asked that henceforth such orders be only changed with an important reason, in other words, he closely followed one of the ten points of *qingli*.⁵⁹¹ There is no indication that this was orchestrated by Han Qi and company, which was certainly advisable after their experience in *qingli*, but in many ways they did not have to, because their earlier memorials and statements gave enough clues as to what they would approve. Now, Han Qi, Fu Bi, and Ouyang Xiu were important enough to be seen as conduits for personal success, as an anecdote about Wang Su would have it, an early supporter of the *qingli* effort, who now supposedly had helped Fu Bi get reinstated, and slandered him when he failed to return the favor and help promote him to the *liang fu*.⁵⁹² Some things should have been less politically charged: a drawn-out discussion about the tea monopoly took place, in the course of which Ouyang Xiu defended the merits of thorough, public discussion, after the court for once actually had tried to implement a law as is and end the debate, issuing a stern warning against 'factionalism';⁵⁹³ this debate showed that the old reflexes of Renzong were still at work, but it also exemplified how difficult it was to come to a definite conclusion about concrete policies in

⁵⁹⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4435-36 (8/1056).

⁵⁹¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 187, p. 4513-14 (1058).

⁵⁹² CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4436. Again, it cannot be excluded that there is a mix up with given names that have a similar character.

⁵⁹³ CB. vol. 8, j. 188, p. 4526-27 (9/1058); edict warning against factionalism: j. 189, p. 4549-50 (2/1059); Ouyang Xiu's memorial: j. 191, p. 4616-20 (3/1060). This might appear in contradiction to the 'make orders binding' theme, but Ouyang Xiu's critique is directed against the fact that there had not been enough discussion in the decision process.

an environment as disputatious as that; it was not easy to determine what the ‘right’ thing for the people exactly was. There were also instances which can be interpreted as retaliation against their earlier enemies: in late 1056, Ouyang Xiu personally attacked Jia Changchao, who supposedly had secretly been behind their downfall in the 1040s, and in his memorial rolled out all the language that by now is familiar from the early Renzong reign – that Jia was a bad person, consorting with eunuchs, prone to politicking in secret to achieve his selfish goals. While not using the word faction, he still leaves no doubt that there are groups of good and bad people, whose advice the emperor should strictly differentiate, and public praise remains one way to find out who is who. In short, if Jia Changchao were to be employed, the culture of public debate and criticism would be thrown into decline, and secret scheming would become the norm.⁵⁹⁴ It took until 6/1058 for Jia to be demoted, in unison with a promotion for Fu Bi and Han Qi.⁵⁹⁵ But despite these signs of a limited renaissance of *qingli* personnel and propositions, the political relationships that become apparent in the public acts are much more muddled than they were before – after all, despite all discussions, a circle of protagonists could be identified with some certainty in *qingli*, who did not agree with each other on everything, but who also did not attack each other as ‘bad men’ either. Now these demarcations are much harder to delineate, as is exemplified in a swift exchange of financial commissioners in 1059, in which Zhang Fangping, who previously had been recommended by Fu Bi, was ousted by Bao Zheng for allegedly engineering for a commoner to have to sell his property to him to pay his tax debt.⁵⁹⁶ He was succeeded by Song Qi, also one of the earlier detractors, who in turn was accused by one censor

⁵⁹⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 184, p. 4452-54.

⁵⁹⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 187, p. 4511-12.

⁵⁹⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4553.

of misdeeds, while Bao himself pointed to problems with two members of the Song family holding high office at the same time; Song Qi resigned, and was replaced by Bao himself. He in turn was attacked by Ouyang Xiu, who at length and with a lot of *qingli* arguments maintained that Bao Zheng should not replace officials he himself had helped to oust, and by rights should have the sense of shame to decline the appointment.⁵⁹⁷ However, it seems that despite his attempts to decline, Bao Zheng in the end did assume the position. These disputes could be interpreted as a problem with officials who, in our interpretation, at best were at the fringes of the circle of ‘good men’, but by others have been seen as members of the anti-reform ‘camp’,⁵⁹⁸ except that another relationship that was increasingly strained was that of Fu Bi to Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu. Keep in mind the dispute about Fan Zhongyan’s epitaph discussed in the introduction, but according to the account in the *Changbian*, at least Han Qi and Fu Bi had been close when they first returned to court positions. However, they were of ‘different character’, leading to problems between them, and when it came to the question of Fu Bi ending his mourning early in 1061, something that hitherto had been quite customary for high officials, Han Qi did not support this idea, which prompted Fu Bi to lament that Han was not willing to vouch for his sincerity (*cheng* 誠) in this matter, and strongly decline a premature return to court.⁵⁹⁹

At this point it also became clear that Wang Anshi’s earlier self-promotion came with a demand, expressed in a memorial handed in with his colleagues in 6/1061, which deserves to be quoted at

⁵⁹⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4554-57. This memorial will be discussed in more detail below.

⁵⁹⁸ Smith, “Anatomies of Reform.” p. 12.

⁵⁹⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4673-75. At another time, Han also failed to support the idea to keep Fu’s old post open when the latter was in mourning, he instead took it himself. CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4718.

length, since it also provides an analysis of the political situation, and allegedly marked a shift in Wang Anshi's allegiances. The issue at hand was an order forbidding drafting officials to voice misgivings about documents they were preparing; note that the office Wang held himself at that point, *zhizhigao* 知制告, was also considered a prestigious drafting position, and while technically not part of the *sheren yuan* 舍人院, the office for drafters, *sheren* was an alternative name for his own position.⁶⁰⁰

We humbly think that the drafters (*sheren*) are ministers working in the immediate vicinity of Your Majesty, it is their administrative duty to take responsibility for imperial orders and edicts, that is what they ought to advise on and interrogate. If the outline of a draft [i.e. the document used to instruct the drafters] does not fully represent the matter that it is supposed to express, and they are not allowed to petition [about this problem], then these drafters are unable to again do their duty, and there is no one who [would offer an opinion] on whether something was possible or not, one would allow the executive ministers to do what [they wanted], and even if one does not assume that these executive ministers intended to be partial and implement their selfish [plans], establishing laws ought not to be done in this way. Previously we have made an argument, hoping to achieve that Your Majesty examines it yourself, and to this day we have not received a directive [in reply]. We do not know if Your Majesty considers [the measure] correct and therefore did not change it? Or perhaps Your Majesty does not necessarily think that it is right, and it is only on account of the suggestion of the executive ministers that it has not been changed? Or is it that Your Majesty considers what we have memorialized as undecided yet, and the executive ministers themselves insist on their suggestion and do not allow it to be changed? If you consider it correct and do not change it, then when we investigated the [historical precedents] since the beginning of the historical record, [we have not found] that there was an era with an intention to govern in which during the establishment of laws the debate among close courtiers would be prevented to an extent as this. [... Wang et al. go on to discuss the two other possibilities of what is going on, which amount to the emperor neglecting his duties as sovereign...]

We humbly observe that Your Majesty since recent years, handed over the handling of the affairs of the realm to seven or eight eminent ministers, and the realm at first was united in its happiness about their activism (*youwei* 有爲), which had the potential of rectifying all the evils. However, at present those among these eminent ministers who are weak, do not dare to stick to the method [of activism] (*shoufa* 守法) on behalf of the emperor and antagonize the censors in the process, and exclusively adhere to a plan [that helps them] keep their office and preserve their position; the strong among the eminent ministers have hijacked the [institution] of imperial edicts to fabricate their own laws and regulations, without restraints they implement what they want, without differentiating between right and wrong in terms of righteousness, and among the censors and remonstrators, there also is nobody who would dare to resist their wishes. Your Majesty still merely stands idly by in deep silence, allowing both of them to do what they do, without asking any questions. How can there be a court [culture] that is like that, which could be kept up for a prolonged period of time without disorder?

Since antiquity, what causes chaos is not necessarily rulers and ministers doing great evil, but merely not having a mind that is completely sincere and earnest in seeking [good] government, not being careful in distinguishing benefits and harms, not early enough differentiating right and wrong, considering small mistakes harmless and not changing them, assuming that a small good deed has no effect and not doing it; [a ruler] being pleased by those fawning on him and agreeing with him, and implementing what they say, [while] detesting honest and sincere contradiction and dismissing their words [will be a source of chaos]; [it also ensues] when accumulated

⁶⁰⁰ Gong, *Songdai guanzhi cidian*. p. 90-91.

achievements are deemed inappropriate, and those people whose hearts one has lost are in the majority; that then is how disorder comes to be.

If Your Majesty considers what we say as true, then you should assume a set of mind that is perfectly sincere and earnest in its desire for order and in being mindful of chaos, examine and investigate the eminent ministers, and change and reform government affairs; as a consequence that order barring the drafters from petitioning to change passages is to be considered inappropriate, and ought to be changed first. If you take our words as false, then we are ignorant of and disregarding the principles of government, and slandering court politics, and in no uncertain terms ought to be demoted, so as to redress the crime of speaking unreasonably. Then you [also ought] to separately choose [other] officials who are talented and well versed, in order to fill [our] respective offices. We are receiving Your Majesty's favor and salary, and are in charge of court offices, we cannot but fulfill [our duty], and therefore we must talk about righteousness. But if the court takes that as false, then out of righteousness we do not dare to defer our demotion. We humbly beg to carefully consider and as early as possible grant a directive.⁶⁰¹

On one hand, Wang Anshi recounts the hopes that he and “all under heaven” had after the promotions of ‘good’ executive ministers, the *qingli* old guard among them, hopes of finally being able to implement activist government. Yet, these hopes were thwarted, by the fact that these people were unfit for the task, and because the emperor failed to take charge and develop the right mindset, and the necessary attention to detail. It is interesting to note that he already talks of the bad influence of the censors, who are unable to keep the willful ministers in check, and yet also by their presence keep the weak ones from doing anything substantial. However, especially in light of the early statement in the *Wan yan shu* that resistance to his program had to be quelled, and given later events, it is remarkable that he would defend an institutional set-up in which offices like that of the drafter have an important function to provide checks and balances against the power of the executive, an executive which he himself would later remodel to circumvent checks and balances, so as to implement his program against all criticism. Here, however, criticism and open debate still is given an important role in achieving the goal of good government, and should not be hindered by carelessness, or a sense of *lèse-majesté*. In other words, he is completely in line with earlier ‘good men’s’ statements about the importance of

⁶⁰¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4677-4679. Note the similarity to the theme of ‘small things have big effects’, which we will see in Sima Guang’s memorials below.

public debate and administrative procedures that leave room for them. Moreover, much like in many a *qingli* memorial, it was a question of us or them; if Wang Anshi was right, then the emperor should do as he said, if not, then he should be demoted. In other words, we see a lot of similarities with earlier rhetoric during *qingli*, with some important differences: *qingli* arguments had already talked of sincerity, but rhetoric or not, Ouyang Xiu had still proclaimed that Renzong wanted to reform, and just did not know how, whereas here the fact that there is not enough will on the part of the emperor to remedy the ills of the world is key. And, of course, the former *qingli* heroes now themselves were part of the target of Wang's criticism; the sources note that this is the moment when Wang Anshi started to go against the executive ministers, which, however, implicitly underlines the fact that he had not been against them earlier, and had more or less associated himself with them instead.⁶⁰² As such, this memorial marks the point when Wang Anshi distanced himself from the, in his view, lackluster and misguided efforts at remedying the current crisis that the remaining *qingli* protagonists made at this point, but he does so decidedly from within the range of general ideas and norms that the *qingli* 'good men' had propagated.

The other point to take away from this is the fragmentation of court politics that Wang Anshi describes. As Wang Anshi only alludes to here, but others would say more explicitly, this fragmentation was caused by censors whose contributions to the debate, whether sincere or not, had a disruptive effect,⁶⁰³ by an executive administration, divided against itself, that was

⁶⁰² CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4679.

⁶⁰³ Note the memorial by Wang Chou talking about this issue, explaining at length how insincere censors had used their positions to promote their private interest. Here he closely links ritual and sincerity in the process, as two indispensable sides of the proper relationship between ruler and minister. 是知上下之分、君臣之義，由禮與誠，則罔

perceived as usurping power and jurisdiction to implement their goals, in turn drawing more criticism, and lastly by the fact that the emperor not just continued, but if anything was more adamant to refrain from the activist, decisive policies and action that the ‘good men’ desired.⁶⁰⁴ After all, this was still the same *wuwei* emperor, only that this time around it was precisely the dissemination of the ideas propagated by *qingli* good men that we have noted earlier, which made these ideas unfit to define ‘us and them’ in the political arena, those who liked to talk, and those who did not; in *jiayou* (1056–63), all liked to talk, or at least pretended to do so, while the earlier backlash against what had all but been an openly declared faction made sure that ‘good men’ tried their best to avoid giving that appearance, and attacked each other to their heart’s content.⁶⁰⁵ The last point is underlined by a strong defense of censors and public debate made by Ouyang Xiu, as a response to a recent series of dismissals, which described a chaotic political situation that defied clear judgment about factions, and tried to give the emperor advice about which contributions to follow and which not.⁶⁰⁶ In a nutshell, the difference is *gong* 公, both in

不治，由嬖與詐，則罔不亂 (CB. vol. 8, j. 194, p. 4687-4690). Even Lü Hui, the most notorious censor in Yingzong’s reign, in fact earlier talked about censors overstepping the mark. Note that the footnotes provide an alternative version of the edict that was prompted by this memorial, which takes up terms and language we have seen before: 君臣同心 [...] 禮義之節 (CB. vol. 8, j. 191, p. 4627). There was also another instance where opposing officials tried to blackmail the emperor into making a decision in their favor by staying at home and “seeking demotion” or “awaiting punishment”. Lü Hui appears to be one of those demoted at this point (CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4666).

⁶⁰⁴ It seems that Renzong still was not a fan of protracted discussion, as shown when he complained about the fact that a debate about the ritual for additional empresses had been undecided for a long time, and orders that the empresses be treated in the ritual as before, and that only the music should be discussed further (CB. vol. 8, j. 190, p. 4589-90; for the discussion, see: p. 4587-89).

⁶⁰⁵ See several memorials and edicts that lament the way things go at the moment, that is, the decline of the system of ritual accoutrements as well as favors and gifts given by the court (CB. vol. 8, j. 191, p. 4628-30), and the fact that those taking part in debates were not sincere, instead they formed factions and followed their private interest (CB. vol. 8, j. 192, p. 4637). Another one by Wang Chou (7/1061) demands more sincerity, and complains that “heart and speech are contradicting each other” 心語兩違 (CB. vol. 8, j. 194, p. 4687-4690). For a consenting edict, see: p. 4691.

⁶⁰⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4680-4683.

the sense of publicness and impartiality, because in Ouyang Xiu's unchanged opinion, something that had been uttered in the limelight of public scrutiny is more prone to be impartial advice than secret correspondence with the inner palace. In any case, dismissing censors, even if they were attacking high officials, was not the way to promote public debates and the 'route to remonstrance', *yanlu*. In other words, both these exchanges and the above memorial by Wang Anshi show that officials that should have been united in their efforts at reform at this point were not just arguing about the details of their proposals and policies, but debating more fundamental questions, and in fact turning the uncompromising acts and language against themselves, which in earlier times had been almost exclusively used against the 'other', be it 'bad' officials or the emperor. As a consequence, it was increasingly hard to see them as a coherent faction even in the limited definition offered above. Simply put, the question was how to tell 'good men' apart from the 'bad' ones in this day and age, when everyone had adopted their language and behavior.

One mark of this new divide was a debate that the core *qingli* reformers had not had among themselves, a question that they had failed to answer, which we have pointed out in the conclusion to Part I: how did one know if the connection between *wen* and *dao*, ritual and sincerity, political performance and decisive action had been made successfully? Related to that, 'sincerity' became more of an issue of debate at this time, rather than largely being part of an already established argument or claim by the reformers, or an attack on them, as it had before and during *qingli*. The conclusion to Part I lists several incidents, also regarding exams, that highlighted this problem, but to further illustrate the point, a ritual phenomenon will be discussed at the end of this chapter which we have already seen as a political tool in *qingli*: the customary

ritual deferrals after being appointed to a position, deferrals that, as we have argued, already in *qingli* had been used in a utilitarian fashion to demonstrate their sincerity and apply pressure on the emperor to grant the ‘good men’ the public approval that they wanted; in the course of their downfall the sincerity of Fan Zhongyan’s deferrals had already been called into question. To some readers, the previous description of this phenomenon in Part I might have sounded hypocritical already, but we should remind ourselves of the fact that Fan Zhongyan explicitly had justified the utilitarian use of righteousness and ritual for the greater good as acceptable, and thus implicitly made the argument that all their later acts and expressions were not unethical as long as they were geared towards that goal. Despite their political failure, or rather, because in their failure they had set an example, these ritual deferrals became even more ritualized and widespread in the waning years of Renzong’s reign, so much so that this excessiveness, as well as instances where this ritual was absent, became an issue of debate. It is in this debate that we already can see the fundamental difference between the *qingli* view of ritual, here represented by Ouyang Xiu, and the view of ritual that would henceforth prevail:

According to precedent, a local military commissioner (*jiedushi*) who was transferred to a different command and was granted a favor, always handed in two separate memorials declining [the post or the favor], and each time a missive was handed down [by the court] in reply, one sent a eunuch to present [the commissioner] with gifts, and without fail there was some token of modesty. This year, Commander Xu Huaide on account of a sacrifice was granted a favor, and also was transferred from Baoning to Jianxiong, and in all submitted only one memorial to decline. Hanlin Scholar Ouyang Xiu impeached his contempt towards a court order, and it was decreed that one should show Xiu’s memorial to him, and order him to follow the precedent and for each occasion decline twice in a memorial. Huaide merely acknowledged and apologized for the offense, and still did not again hand in another memorial, he was vulgar like that. But the discussants were of the opinion that when an official declined an office, then that should come from his own will, and should not be something that someone from above would force on him.⁶⁰⁷

Most of the ‘discussants’ remain unnamed in this anecdote, other than Liu Chang, considered a friend of Ouyang Xiu, whose memorial in the matter will be discussed shortly, but it still very much displays two very different ideas of ritual, despite the fact that both accept the ritual

⁶⁰⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 190, p. 4603.

deferrals as the norm: Ouyang Xiu insists that the ritual is important as such, regardless of the inner attitude the practitioner adopts towards it. Since this neatly ties in with the argument Ouyang Xiu made in his denouncement of the promotion of Bao Zheng, the latter can serve as the theoretical explanation for this tenet: in his criticism, Ouyang Xiu attests Bao Zheng a stern and principled character, but laments that he lacks scholarship, and thus the foresight to think of the larger implications for the dynasty if he were to supplant an official he had helped to oust. In that respect it is irrelevant that it was not his intention to succeed Zhang Fangping and Song Qi to begin with, that is, that he acted in sincerity earlier, the point is that he should have the sense of shame to know better than accepting this promotion when it came up, rather than making the firm deferral that the situation called for. Ouyang Xiu's reasoning is closely tied to the larger concept of *ming jie* 'reputation and integrity', which is familiar to us from 'On Factions', and in this context had been loosely connected to social ritual among literati in a private context, and as one factor that helped to bring about unity among 'good men'.⁶⁰⁸ In this memorial against Bao Zheng, the preamble reiterates the larger case for the state: there is a hierarchy of importance of what to look for when employing people; military positions should be filled drawing on a man's talent and ability, but for civil officials, it was reputation and integrity that should be cherished first and foremost. He provides the following reasoning for that:

The main task of the court is [ethical] transformation through education; the quality of the customs and the rise and fall of good government is intricately connected to employing [the right] people, but in implementing transformation through education below [with the commoners], they cannot go [to each] family and sincerely order them to do so; therefore as a rule one makes sure to honor literati with reputation and integrity, in order to change all under heaven by persuasion and example, and to encourage its deprived [elements]. As to what I mean by literati of reputation and integrity, they know a sense of shame, they cultivate ritual and modest deferral, they do not profit from what they can get without regard [to ethics], are not swayed by those who curry favor with them, and [only] ponder what the righteous position is.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4554-57.

⁶⁰⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4554-55.

Therefore, it is reputation and integrity that literati ought to hold in esteem to get ahead, and the ruler ought to safeguard these to educate good literati-officials. In its entirety, esteeming these is a way to make literati-officials themselves, but also government and society normatively better, or to speak within our framework, more sincere. However, as Ouyang's own explanation of Bao Zheng's misdeed and the shorter anecdote above show, it should not matter if the ritual that is part of this is done in sincerity, even if insincere, it can fulfill its function within the larger mechanism. In this way, even the utilitarian use of this ritual in *qingli* served this larger purpose. While Ouyang Xiu is not talking about cases in which it is overdone, it was precisely this potential insincerity, and the utility that such acts had when trying to make a name for oneself, which others found most problematic in this day and age. Like the unknown discussant(s) above, Liu Chang in the following memorial was more troubled by those who deferred too often than those who did not defer enough, in fact attributing the latter phenomenon to the fact that this ritual had become an empty act that could serve to achieve renown in the realm, making it unfit to really show who was a 'good man' and who was not:

Liu Chang said: 'I humbly observe that there is a precedent for the various cases of declining office, whether [one is supposed to] decline one, two, or three times, they all have their [firm] ranked hierarchy, and without fail one wants everybody to decline. The [outward] act of deferring promotes one's reputation, and therefore appears fake, so that those who perform the ritual hate it and are vexed [by it], vexed to the point that they come close to being disrespectful; this is why one establishes middling regulations as a means to prohibit that. When in antiquity Shun commissioned the nine officials, Kui and Long did not decline, and other than that men such as Bo Yi left it at one deferral, this then was the law of a flourishing, peaceful age. I humbly observe that recently the *shidafu*, each time there is an order of promotion, regardless if it is high or low, without exception always are deferring numerous times. Although there are [cases] where this comes from their utmost sincerity, and of indifference towards the benefits that come with this situation, it still is the case that they too exceed what is in the rules and regulations, and surpass Kui and Yi.

If the habits and conventions one by one become fake, and the current customs bit by bit become worn out, necessarily one then relies on falsehood to seek a reputation, seeking to one-up [everyone else] to mislead the public (*zhong*), and furthermore one considers this as a shortcut for advancement and promotion, a quick and prudent secret plan, this is deeply abominable, much beyond the vexation with the ritual! Although this [ritual] deferral has a virtuous way to it, [that is] the good man does it in abundance and the lesser man not enough, if there is no genuineness in it, then the evil is even worse. [Some historical examples follow of actors falsely deferring a position.] I say that the [moral] integrity of the wise lies in finding it hard to accept promotions and easy to acquiesce to demotions. What is meant by that is not merely the [one-off act] of declining one position, it means that he is capable of selecting it according to righteousness, without incurring the misdeed of being un-ritual (*feili*). Therefore although he does not defer that often, his moral integrity is still apparent.

The disposition of the majority of people is to love getting something and to hate losing it. This still does not mean that he is openly eager to receive an office, it means that he will not choose it according to righteousness, and will exceed what is demanded by ritual to make his move. Therefore although he firmly declines repeatedly, his disposition is still very cunning. In the question of deferring, if one solely takes the precedents and old texts as yardstick, and makes no allowance for those who are fishing for personal benefit by coercing the ruler, and those who are seeking a reputation by dealing in falsehood, and one is unfortunate enough not to place value in the accurate understanding of Ziyang, then the likes of Gongsun Duan (two examples mentioned above) will have divisive struggles at court. [...]

[A comment by the compiler follows:] At the time the *shidafu* were increasingly relying on empty reputations, each time they received an office they always deferred, and the public [*zhong*] in spite of that gave them praise for being disinterested in status and glory. When declining one did not lose the original benefit and gained a reputation that was increasingly magnificent, there was no limit to deferring, no matter if one declined four or five times, or as much as seven or eight times, the Son of Heaven as a rule treated them with leniency. Down to the commoners such as Chen Lie and others, when first they were appointed to an office they also deferred, when gifting them with grain and cloth they also declined.⁶¹⁰

The last paragraph could be an innocuous, general statement by Li Tao on the ills of that time, except that both before and after this entry we find numerous anecdotes of Wang Anshi declining office in the most forceful ways;⁶¹¹ it is interesting to see that Sima Guang appears to have recorded one of these stories in his journal, when both were given office, and Wang outdid him in his insistence on declining it. At that time, in an almost comic scene, Wang Anshi hid in the privy to avoid the messenger that had been sent to plead with him and hand over the edict, and when he left it on his desk, Wang sent someone after him to give it back.⁶¹² According to a different story (10/1062), Wang Anshi in a judicial review case had offered a differing judgment, but the review offices upheld the original verdict; Wang Anshi subsequently was pardoned for this miscarriage of justice, but declined to make the customary visit to give thanks for this

⁶¹⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 190, p. 4603-04.

⁶¹¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4566; j. 191, p. 4620. CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4677. Here there is a cryptic note that after being promoted to *zhizhi gao*, Wang Anshi never again declined an office, but he certainly still had that reputation of “not coming to court” in the beginning of Shenzong, although he is still listed as *zhizhi gao* then (CB. vol. 9, j. 209, p. 5087). He also declines a post as (ritual) envoy (CB. vol. 8, j. 192, p. 4641). Note that Sima Guang and Lü Gongzhu are declining to be vetted for the chancellery, too, Lü more forcefully than Sima, although both do not accept in the end (CB. vol. 8, j. 196, p. 4745).

⁶¹² CB. vol. 8, j. 192, p. 4652. According to the *Wenjian lu*, most of these anecdotes about Wang declining office were recorded by Sima Guang in different diary style writings, after the two had “severed their ties” (*Wenjian lu*. j. 11, p. 116). The stories here and in CB are somewhat different, but clearly related.

pardon, stating that he had done nothing wrong. He was impeached for that, but the executive officers did not act on it, because of his strong reputation.⁶¹³ In another anecdote Sima Guang recounted that one time, when alcohol was served by their superior, Bao Zheng, both he and Wang Anshi declined, but whereas Sima eventually gave in when Bao Zheng forced it on him, Wang Anshi to the end did not. Sima Guang concludes that “this is how I learned that he would not yield.”⁶¹⁴ After the fact, that is, after the onset of the chaos of the *xining* reforms, these anecdotes of course were interpreted as giving evidence to the degree of Wang Anshi’s stubbornness that turned out to be so much of a problem during his tenure, or even, as Li Tao seems to imply very indirectly in his comment, his insincerity and reputation-seeking. There is no way for us to know if Wang Anshi acted cunningly or not, and in fact that is irrelevant at this point, but Sima Guang’s and Li Tao’s anecdotes do allow us to deduce one thing: that in a day and age that was troubled by the question of sincerity and was looking for it in these public displays, Wang both with his memorials and his acts of deferral accrued the reputation of being the most sincere, or radical, of all, not least because he stayed out of the political turmoils that were soon to come.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹³ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4783.

⁶¹⁴ *Wenjian lu*. j. 10, p. 108.

⁶¹⁵ The latter is an observation made by Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 213. The fact that Wang Anshi had become known and popular for his learning and conduct is on several occasions attested to by Sima Guang, of all people: at the beginning of the Shenzong era Sima Guang ran into Lü Hui at court, who was about to hand in a memorial exposing Wang Anshi’s deviousness. Sima Guang points out to him that the public (*zhong*) was elated by the fact that the right man had been appointed (*de ren*). *Wenjian houlu*. j. 23, p. 177.

Chapter 2. Coming to terms with a paradox: Sima Guang's social and intellectual relationship to the *qingli* reform and its proponents

Sima Guang arguably could be called the mastermind behind *puyi*, for under the name of Wang Gui he authored the original two documents that elaborated the position of the opposition, namely that the Prince of Pu and his wives should not receive ritual titles that reflected the fact that they were the parents of Emperor Yingzong, since that status was the prerogative of Yingzong's adopted parents, Renzong and Empress Cao; virtually all other critics referred to this opinion and supported it in their own contributions to the debate. Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu, on the other hand, had started the debate with their initial question about the ritual status of Yingzong's natural parents, and would later insist that the title for them would have to recognize their status as such. As we have seen, most of the junior officials and censors who criticized and attacked Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu were connected to them socially or otherwise, with the most extreme example being Fan Chunren, the son of their late comrade in arms, but also including Lü Gongzhu and Han Wei. Yet, in contrast to the other figures of the *puyi* opposition, it is much harder to find close social connections to the *qingli* 'good men' for Sima Guang, that is, other than by proxy, because of course there were many secondary contacts that they shared; commentators note a personal and intellectual distance between Sima Guang and Ouyang Xiu.⁶¹⁶ While I do think that this observation is pertinent for this study in some ways, in that the apparent lack (prior to *puyi*) of social ritual between Sima Guang and the *qingli* protagonists is significant in and by itself, and could be part of the explanation for their falling out, this chapter

⁶¹⁶ Bol. "Government, Society, and State." p. 146n34. This entire passage is devoted to showing the intellectual differences between *guwen* and Sima Guang (p. 146-151).

will qualify this statement, and show that there in fact exist less apparent intellectual and social connections to the *qingli* reformers and their ideas.

In general, *puyi* is seen as a minor incident within the larger narrative of Sima Guang becoming the ‘conservative’ opponent of Wang Anshi, and therefore scholars are keen to incorporate it into their larger argument about this development. Ji Xiao-bin does so by emphasizing the role *puyi* played in Sima Guang’s “special relationship” with the imperial house that he sees, in that it supposedly strengthened the role and power of the emperor.⁶¹⁷ For Bol, the “dispute revealed a divided court” between the pro-reform *qingli* old-guard and a group “long associated with opposition to institutional change.”⁶¹⁸ Within these frameworks, there is no need to explain this analysis further for the *puyi* case, since in the course of both author’s general analysis of Sima Guang’s thought, he has been placed firmly in the ‘conservative’ or anti-reform camp from the start;⁶¹⁹ especially Bol makes the case that in the face of the *qingli* defeat, Sima Guang tried to find an alternative purpose for literati, and that associations such as his mentor Pang Ji 龐籍 (988?–1063), as well as his pre-*xining* writings mark him as an anti-reformer critical of both the ancient style premise and its 1040s manifestation in political reform.⁶²⁰ Yet, Bol at the same time points out that Sima Guang at certain phases wrote in ancient style, and that some of his 1057 essays can be read as supporting the new government of *qingli* reformers, if “on his own

⁶¹⁷ Xiao-bin Ji, *Politics and conservatism in northern Song China: the career and thought of Sima Guang (A.D. 1019–1086)*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2005. p. 96-97, 107-108. This view is influenced by James T.C. Liu.

⁶¹⁸ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 213. He adds to that in a footnote that it “was an attempt to overturn the council by its traditional opponents.” p. 422n6.

⁶¹⁹ In his sketch of Sima Guang’s early life, Ji Xiao-bin goes to great lengths to outline the influence of Sima Guang’s father and his mentor Pang Ji in this development to ‘conservatism’. Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. p. 21-33.

⁶²⁰ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 141, 141n20, 146-148.

grounds”.⁶²¹ One goal of studies such as this is to clear Sima Guang of the suspicion of having solely acted on the interest of his socio-economic class, and put the philosophical underpinning of his resistance to the Wang Anshi’s New Laws to the foreground.⁶²²

It is very tempting to follow this lead and draw one straight line between this supposed opposition, or at least skepticism towards the *qingli* reforms, and Sima Guang’s quite open resistance to Han Qi’s and Ouyang Xiu’s argument in the *puyi* question. Whether one calls it conservative, or upholding the existing social and dynastic order, to prevent an infraction on the ritual status of the former emperor in a tricky adoption situation would fit the bill for both, and fully explain Sima Guang’s criticism. Yet, with the somewhat revised picture of literati associations in mind that we gleaned from the preceding part, which also failed to yield much evidence for a coherent, openly conservative ‘other camp’ vis-à-vis the good men during *qingli*, a closer look at Sima Guang’s associations and writings seems to be in order to revisit the question of his pre-Yingzong affiliation. The intellectual problem, from my perspective, is also the determinism that is implied in this argument, a determinism that links divergent opinion and ideas directly with political enmity, even before there was a political reason for it, without leaving any leeway for compromise or allowing for potential common ground within these different arguments. Yet the problem starts with the social side of this argument as well: it has

⁶²¹ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 141, 150n43.

⁶²² Sariti gives this goal a prominent place right at the start of his dissertation on Sima Guang (Anthony W. Sariti, *The Political Thought of Ssu-ma Kuang: Bureaucratic Absolutism in the Northern Sung*. Georgetown University, 1970 (Dissertation). Abstract; p. 2-3). Bol is somewhat more reluctant and nuanced, but also tellingly notes that there “is little solid evidence” that Sima Guang was a “representative of the [...] large landlords”, contrary to a common claim about him. Bol does however see a connection between Sima’s background from an established Northern family and his convictions that the state should not interfere with the social order. Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 130-131.

been argued from his pattern of office holding and associations that Sima Guang's patron Pang Ji was allied with another faction than the one we have called the 'good men', possibly with Xia Song, mainly because he came into high court office shortly after their departure, and was later, shortly before the return of Han Qi and company, ousted by Han Jiang; we have placed the latter at the 1057 examinations as co-examiner with the 'good men', and later he would go on to become a staunch supporter of Wang Anshi in *xining*.⁶²³ Indeed, there is no indication of Pang Ji's attitude towards the reform program as such, but on the other hand there also is a considerable amount of circumstantial evidence that places Pang Ji in close proximity to the ideas and circles of the *qingli* 'good men': Xue Kui 薛奎 (967?-1034) is named as an early recommender of Pang Ji, as well as of Fan Zhongyan; Xue also was the father-in-law of Ouyang Xiu.⁶²⁴ In an episode after Dowager Liu's death, when she had decreed her confidante to become regent, Pang Ji asked to burn the screen that marked the regent's position, urged the emperor to take power into his own hands, "differentiate good and bad when employing officials, guard against factions, gather public opinion, and prevent that orders are originating with the executive ministers;" he subsequently was praised by Kong Daofu as a censor working for the emperor and not yielding to the chancellors like the others.⁶²⁵ Shortly before that, Fan Zhongyan had spoken out against the succession in the regency;⁶²⁶ Kong Daofu later would be dismissed with Fan

⁶²³ Bol, "Government, Society, and State." p. 141, 141n20.

⁶²⁴ Both the *Changbian* death notice for Xue and the epitaph for Pang authored by Sima Guang name Xue Kui as mentor of Pang Ji (CB. vol. 5, j. 115, p. 2692; QSW. vol. 56, j. 1226, p. 277). Sima Guang does not mention Fan Zhongyan or Ouyang Xiu in the epitaph, dated 1063.

⁶²⁵ CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2616. In 8/1034, Pang Ji would try to have Fan Feng investigated (QSW. vol. 17, j. 365, p. 408), whom the *Changbian* describes as an associate of Lü Yijian, because he had been the latter's tool in bringing about the dismissal of Empress Guo in 12/1033 (CB. vol. 5, j. 113, p. 2648).

⁶²⁶ CB. vol. 5, j. 112, p. 2614-15.

Zhongyan for speaking out in the affair of the dismissal of Empress Guo; moreover, as abbreviated as they may be, his demands match almost perfectly with what we have identified as the core tenets of the ‘good men’, at that time and later. Pang Ji at times seems to have taken part in debates about specific policies with the ‘good men’, which we earlier have interpreted as a sign of being associated with them, rather than against them.⁶²⁷ After a common stint at a border command, it is only Fan Zhongyan’s dismissal and subsequent elevation that causes them to part ways, and leaves Pang Ji in Fan Zhongyan’s former position conducting the negotiations with the Xi Xia.⁶²⁸ This position of course carries the potential to bring them apart, since that was the peace accord that Fan Zhongyan and the others were so opposed to. Indeed, there is no sign that Pang Ji really obstructed anything, or acted without the authorization of the court, as Fan Zhongyan had, but his epitaph, authored by Sima Guang, still at length recounts how he at some point declined to reply without the court ordering him to do so, due to the Xi Xia’s lack of modesty in their communication, how he made sure that the court did not treat the Xi Xia envoys with undue ritual courtesy, and in the end with his wise suggestions, followed by the court, secured the desired outcome, namely that the Xi Xia ruler ritually submitted to the Song as subjects, *chen* 臣.⁶²⁹ At this point we should remind ourselves that the ‘good men’ at court handed in memorial after memorial demanding that the Xi Xia would call themselves subject, and in the strongest possible terms argued against a peace accord without that stipulation. In

⁶²⁷ There is one memorial in which Pang Ji discusses a suggestion by Fan Zhongyan regarding border strategy in a critical but nuanced way, whereas Han Qi is completely against some of the suggestions, because it will be troubling the people (CB. vol. 6, j. 135, p. 3222).

⁶²⁸ Dunnell, *Tanguts*. p. 125-126.

⁶²⁹ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1226, p. 279-280. It is curious that the reference to Xia Song’s high opinion of Pang Ji’s recorded in Pang’s SS biography (SS. vol. 29, j. 311, p. 10198) is absent in Sima Guang’s epitaph; a possible reason will become clear below.

other words, here too, Pang Ji agreed with the ‘good men’s’ policies, or Sima Guang at the very least wants us to believe that he did, the only difference is that he was more submissive to the court, which, however, also allowed him to stay in place. Should he have been a discreet associate of the ‘good men’, the importance of the peace accord and his role in it could also explain why he never took an active part in the reforms themselves. Finally, there is the fascinating question how the ‘good men’ received all their first-hand information about proceedings they supposedly had no part in – although we have no direct evidence that it was in fact Pang Ji who furnished them with the inside knowledge they needed for their memorials, or that he was in fact an active member of their political group.

Due to this lack of positive evidence, it would be going too far to turn the previous argument on its head and place Pang Ji firmly in the camp of the ‘good men’, instead, the point of this discussion once more is to emphasize that clear demarcations between groups are hard to make, that we must accept the ambiguity of social relationships as is, and that it is possible to imagine situations in which it was beneficial to be discreet about such alliances. Looking at all the evidence, Pang Ji turns out to be one more example of an official who for some reason had no direct part in the political effort, but had considerable social and ideological commonalities with the reformers, at least in the broad version that we have identified in the previous part.

The other evidence in support of the argument that Sima Guang was an anti-reformer from the beginning are some of his writings from that time and in the 1050s and 1060s, which are interpreted as critical of a reform effort that “refashions the world according to an ideal model”,

as well as the significance of *guwen* writing in the process of bettering the world.⁶³⁰ In terms of providing their own political vision, a series of programmatic memorials from the 1060s argue that a non-founding ruler should maintain the institutional structure as it has been received from the founders, and make sure to keep it in good repair by making the right decisions, especially in terms of getting the right men to man the different positions.⁶³¹ Learning from history was the key to not only maintain that structure, but to potentially preserve it forever.⁶³² Rather than drawing into question that these are the main premises of Sima Guang's thought, that he had formed the core of these tenets at an early stage, or that they were a key motivation for his opposition to Wang Anshi's reforms, the goal in the remainder of this chapter is to show how Sima Guang's thought, despite its open and implied criticism of some thinkers that we have seen in the first part, still fits very well with the political ideas and goals of the *qingli* 'good men', rather than going against them. Moreover, we will see that Sima Guang in these early stages did make some adjustments to how this thinking would translate into statements concerning practical policies, as opposed to the radical conservatism that he would exhibit later.

Bol uses a series of essays to juxtapose what he sees as the difference between Sima Guang and mainly Ouyang Xiu, e.g. pointing out that 'On Merit and Fame' urges the ruler to find men that are "truly committed to the survival of the state", not "men who have achieved fame in literati opinion," and that in Sima Guang's 'On Factions' he argues for "the 'good' faction [being] one that defends the public quality of the state (as opposed to the party of idealists of Ouyang Xiu's

⁶³⁰ Bol, "Government, Society, and State." p. 148, 151.

⁶³¹ Bol, "Government, Society, and State." p. 152-154.

⁶³² Bol, "Government, Society, and State." p. 152, 157-160.

famous essay).”⁶³³ However, in these essays, as well as in ‘Knowing Men’ and several other ones, the overarching theme invariably is that it is the first and foremost duty of the ruler to “know men”, to differentiate between good and evil, and to select and completely trust these wise men with government affairs, as he put it in ‘On Merit and Fame (*ming*)’, “For a ruler to have wise [men] and being unable to know them as such is the same as not having wise men at all; to know them as such and not being able to employ them is the same as not knowing them at all; to employ them without being able to trust them is the same as not employing them; when not employing wise men, it is indeed hard to strive for the prettiness/glory of merit and achievement, and the limelight of fame and reputation.”⁶³⁴ It should be pointed out that according to the footnote in *Quan Song wen*, the title is not original, and indeed the concept of reputation/fame is only found in this, and one other passage; the second one talks about two rulers trying to use Confucius and Mencius to bolster their reputation, causing them to leave because their ideas were not put into practice; it was not the case that these rulers were not aware of their sagacity.⁶³⁵ It seems to me that he talks more about the fame of the ruler than that of the minister. Otherwise, the argument centers on merit, that is, the merit of officials that is actually the ruler’s, because he was able to employ them the right way. While reputation (*ming*) is not given the positive connotation that it had with Ouyang Xiu and company, we should keep in mind that with them, too, it was a reputation based on real deeds and merit, not on ‘empty words’, that did the trick. Sima Guang is merely somewhat more radical in his own version of the *qingli* demand of

⁶³³ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 150.

⁶³⁴ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1219, p. 146. For the series of programmatic essays, see: CB. vol. 8, j. 194, p. 4693-4697, 4699-4710. For a more practical demand, demanding access to the emperor without eunuch supervision: CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4720.

⁶³⁵ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1219, p. 147.

choosing the right men, rather than diametrically opposed to it; his concern fits well with the more general question that appeared post-*qingli*, regarding the best way to find out whether a given official was ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Despite these real differences, with the background of Renzong’s style of rule in mind, what Sima Guang writes becomes a critique that is very much in line with what the ‘good men’ would state publicly in the 1030s, when they criticized Renzong for failing to choose sides and take a stand in personnel questions in favor of good people under the rubric *yong ren* or *de qi ren*. So even if the dating of the *Quan Song wen* to 1035 is correct, when Sima Guang was 16, this piece places him within the wider sphere of what we have described as the different opinions but unified political goals of the ‘good men’; however, any date later than the clash between Lü Yijian and Fan Zhongyan in 1036 makes this a non-too-subtle call on the emperor to keep and trust the ‘good men’, or a strong criticism for his lack of trust and decisiveness when ousting them. It also indeed is the case that there is a marked difference between Ouyang Xiu’s and Sima Guang’s ‘On Factions’ (1058), since for Sima Guang factions are always ‘private’ or partial, and never public or impartial, and as such there cannot be a ‘good’ faction;⁶³⁶ however, we should remind ourselves that Ouyang Xiu himself soon after ‘On Factions’ dropped ‘faction’ as self-description for good men, albeit probably only for expedient reasons; he largely leaves in place what the ‘good men’ do and how they do it, and before and after the change in terminology would claim that they in all circumstances act perfectly impartial and public (*gong*). Therefore, disregarding this discrepancy in the normative meaning of the term ‘faction’ for a moment, Sima Guang is remarkably close to what Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu said about factions when he states that factionalism was always part of any political entity, even those ruled by the sage kings, for him, as for the *qingli* good men,

⁶³⁶ That is an interpretation by Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 56-60.

the difference was that the sages knew how to distinguish good and bad men, and mediocre rulers did not.⁶³⁷ This is very much what Fan and Ouyang had said in a nutshell, and fits well with the argument that Sima Guang here was merely one of many in a choir that demanded action, or what the ‘good men’ in *qingli* would have called *youwei*, activism, of the ruler, in the very limited way that we have defined it in the first part,⁶³⁸ that is, with a special emphasis on acts regarding personnel decisions, as exemplified by the following passage from ‘Be Careful about Habits’:

I humbly see that you have the sternness and respect of a middle emperor, and are careful like King Wen, but the small and the big issues of government alike, you more often than not modestly defer and do not decide, charging your ministers with them. If one really can make sure that those who are charged with them always are loyal and wise, then that is acceptable. But if there is a treacherous and evil [person] in this place, how is that not very dangerous! What in antiquity was called to delegate and require achievements is to select people and give them a position; one would not deal personally with the trivial details. But as to ranks and salaries, dismissals and promotions, decisions on life and death, and awards and punishment, if they do not come from [the ruler] himself then that is not acceptable. [...] [It follows that,] once the handles of rewards and punishment are lost to someone, and [the realm] has acquired the habit of taking this as the norm, then one cannot get them back again. This is what the enlightened ruler should be cautious about.⁶³⁹

For the emperor to keep the ‘handles of government’ in his hands is something that the *qingli* ‘good men’ had demanded themselves time and again, although what they demanded exactly at times changed with the respective political situation they were in.

⁶³⁷ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1219, p. 153. Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 57.

⁶³⁸ While I would argue that what Sima Guang argued for politically at this point was very similar, he probably would not have called that activism. Note a little snippet talking about Sima Guang’s definition of *wuwei*, preserved only in Shaoshi houlu, and therefore of dubious provenance and without date (*Wenjian houlu*. j. 4, p. 33): “Those who do *Huanglao* think if their heart-mind was like dead ashes, and their form like a withered tree, then that would be enacting nonaction. Sima Guang considered this to be untrue, and penned the [essay] ‘The Substance of Wuwei’, saying: cultivating the mind drawing on uprightness, safeguarding the self using calmness, in advancing and withdrawing one has righteousness, and for good things and mistakes one draws on the mandate, preserving the self lies in oneself, in success and merit one heeds heaven, someone who ‘actively acts’ [to attain that] loses it, therefore nothing is better than having it all by itself, [without effort].”

⁶³⁹ 謹習疏. QSW. vol. 54, j. 1181, p. 271.

One passage about *yong ren* in Sima's 'On Factions' is remarkable with respect to how to treat factions, because it specifies how the ruler should prevent factionalism from becoming a problem: after referring to quotes from the classics that call on rulers to be impartial and not let factionalism become a fire that burns everything with it, Sima Guang recounts examples of sage rulers who exercised utmost impartiality in employment, and received such impartiality from their subjects, such as when Shun executed Yu's father, but still had Yu assist him. In other words, these sages did not let outward association with bad people, that is, the superficial, social appearances of factionalism, get in the way of what was the best personnel decision for the state. This is contrasted with Tang Wenzong, who, when stating that it was harder to get rid of factionalism than to pacify *He*, it seems to Sima Guang was not intelligent enough to realize that the issue was not to get rid of factionalism, and associations, as such, but to always be completely impartial in his decisions, and in this way not provide more fuel for the fire of factionalism, thereby preventing it from spreading and becoming dangerous.⁶⁴⁰ However, this is not dissimilar to what Ouyang Xiu claimed in his own 'On Factions', again, minus employing 'faction' as a positive self-description, namely that it was futile to try and get rid of all factions at court equally, and to be suspicious of and punish any outward appearance of it; instead one ought to ensure that the good ones, the impartial ones, won out, by being partial towards the 'good' faction for Ouyang Xiu, and by impartially favoring the 'good' individual for Sima Guang. Therefore in Sima Guang's mind it is not just the fault of the officials involved that factionalism brought the Tang Dynasty down, in fact it is the emperor who is mostly to blame. If anything, the later passage in *Zizhi tongjian* regarding factions that Levine quotes appears to be more like that, with much the same rhetoric as to the goodness and impartiality of personnel selection, that is,

⁶⁴⁰ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1219, p. 153.

promoting the worthy and dismissing the unworthy.⁶⁴¹ Now, the difference in language between the early essay by Ouyang Xiu and that by Sima Guang is not irrelevant, and does signify a change from a situation where it was possible to be more open about associations to one where it was not, a change that Ouyang Xiu's writing on the topic also reflected; however, it is not enough to construct a fundamental opposition between the two on this basis, and at this point in 1058. Given the prominence of Ouyang Xiu's 'On Factions', and its consequences for the political fate of the *qingli* reformers, Sima Guang's act of writing another essay with the same name, and urging the emperor to make impartial decisions for the 'good men' in it, instead could even be interpreted as supporting Ouyang Xiu and company at a time when they were on the rise again. It is only our 'knowledge' that the two were intellectual opponents that leads us to look for and emphasize the differences between the two texts.

It has been argued that Sima Guang spoke out against refashioning the world according to an ideal model,⁶⁴² and the ideal model of antiquity indeed has an important place in the thinking of the good men discussed in the first part, but we should also keep in mind that they, with one exception, in their official political proclamations during *qingli* never claimed to directly implement an ancient ideal into political practice, and instead drew on a variety of references and quotes to make their argument for their reforms. While they oftentimes did draw on a general ancient principle that they believed to have recognized, for the specifics of their argument, they more often than not took their examples from post-classical history, as well as making the claim that the founders had done it that way. Therefore, it is hard to see how Sima Guang's preference

⁶⁴¹ Levine, *Divided by a Common Language*. p. 60-61.

⁶⁴² Bol, "Government, Society, and State." p. 148.

of drawing on the founders in his argument would automatically pit him politically against Ouyang Xiu, Han Qi, et al., even if he disagreed with the *fugu* rhetoric they had exhibited elsewhere. Furthermore, as we have seen in the previous part, it was part of the cachet of being good men to be disputatious with one's mentors and peers, indeed we have seen many cases in which even closer associates were equally, or even more critical of the reforms or specific measures. Thus, more or less public criticism, as well as the differences noted above, would mark Sima Guang as part of that group, or aspiring to be a part of it, if we follow one of the arguments offered in the previous chapters.

Again, this is not to say that the revisionism should go so far as to deny what has been reconstructed as Sima Guang's peculiar ideology by scholars such as Bol, Sariti, and Ji Xiao-bin, in fact it is likely that Pang Ji had a deep influence on Sima Guang in his emphasis on preserving the status quo in a dynasty as it was established by the founders.⁶⁴³ The argument that Sima's thought model in some way or other constituted a reaction to the experience and fate of the *qingli* reforms and reformers still appears plausible as well, a thought model so aptly described by his image of the dynasty as a building (which among other influences inspired the title of this part), with the different institutional parts that all have a pivotal role in preserving the edifice as a whole; it was the emperor's responsibility that all parts were maintained and kept in place, in order to keep the building in good order and working condition; this metaphor has been

⁶⁴³ Even a cursory look at Pang Ji's extant writings shows that he had a penchant for arguing with the founders, as well talking about *yong ren* (QSW. vol. 17, j. 365, p. 404-405). Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. p. 28. Note also the connection to the legitimizing function of historical writing that Lamouroux describes, for Pang Ji was part of one of the compilation teams that Lamouroux lists. Lamouroux, "Song Renzong's Court Landscape." p. 90.

extensively discussed by Bol.⁶⁴⁴ However, within this given structure, even Sima Guang demands action and decisiveness from the ruler, and therefore his views are not entirely incompatible with the *qingli* reforms as such, at least not in the form that we have described them above; having said that, it is still true that the ambiguities and ‘messiness’ of the political, but also intellectual and social experience during *qingli* that we have discussed in the previous part should have provided sufficient motivation for the next generation to search for a better, more stringent foundation of their arguments – a foundation in something ‘real’, as Bol has put it in a comment about the commonalities in the ways Wang Anshi and Sima Guang would ground their different arguments.⁶⁴⁵

It is probably not spoiling the surprise to say that this foundation would be considered exclusively ‘sincere’ within the framework of this study, and once again we will attempt to show Sima Guang’s position on ritual and sincerity by discussing a number of texts, mostly before *puyi*, which in a very general way have a ritual topic. We will see that in this respect, Sima Guang’s thinking was very different from that of the group of *qingli* good men that we have discussed in part one. At the same time, these texts will also show how that ‘paradox’ could have worked, that is, how Sima Guang could have different, sincere ideas and still take part in the common political enterprise of the ‘good men’ before *puyi*. However, my contention would be that that actually is more the norm in political systems than an exception and paradox, as it is made out implicitly by those who assume that Sima’s diverging ideas would automatically have led to a fundamental aversion against the *qingli* reforms and the reformers.

⁶⁴⁴ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 152-153; *This Culture of Ours*. p. 220.

⁶⁴⁵ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 236-237.

In the first text of the selection, which will remain untranslated, Sima Guang in a memorial to the throne quite unambiguously identified himself as a *protégé* of Pang Ji, who tried to pay back some of his debt to his mentor by asking for a promotion to exam rank for Pang's son. What makes this interesting is that Sima Guang compares Pang Ji's example to Du Yan, a supporter of the reforms, who supposedly also had been promoted (to a sinecure) and granted a *jinshi* status for his son on account of his achievements for the dynasty. Sima Guang argues that after Pang's promotion to a comparable position, he now should receive a similar status for his son as well. The point is that Sima Guang had no qualms to put Pang Ji in a row with what is considered one of the most senior supporters of the reform, a proposition that would have been counterproductive if Pang Ji had been a known opponent of the reform and its proponents.⁶⁴⁶

The following two texts support this point from a different angle: as early as 1052 Sima Guang in very acerbic fashion argued against conferring a posthumous title on Xia Song, one of the 'villains' of the *qingli*-era, who according to Pang Ji's official biography had recognized Sima Guang's mentor as talent worthy of the chancellery, an anecdote that Sima Guang conveniently leaves out in his own epitaph for Pang, or rather, that has been added in his official *Song shi* biography.⁶⁴⁷ In other words, whatever the nature of Pang Ji's earlier connection to Xia Song, in this respect and at this time, Sima Guang is standing *on the same side* as the 'good men', if we believe the sources that Xia was behind much of the slander that plagued the *qingli* good men during their downfall. Given that it also contains quite a few programmatic statements about ritual, these two memorials will be discussed in detail:

⁶⁴⁶ QSW. vol. 54, j. 1183, p. 290.

⁶⁴⁷ SS. vol. 29, j. 311, p. 10198. QSW. vol. 56, j. 1226, p. 279-280.

About Xia Song's posthumous title

We humbly observe that Xia Song, on account of him being an old acquaintance from your days as crown prince, has extraordinarily been bequeathed with the posthumous title *Wenzheng*. I have read that the *Dazaili* says: 'The posthumous title, is a mark of "good" conduct.' Conduct emanates from the self, a title comes into existence inside the person, what serves to exhort the good and curb the bad cannot be appropriated for one's own partial preferences [*si 私*]. We humbly deign to be part of the office for ritual, the merits and demerits of the posthumous title [by virtue of our] office is what we ought to discuss, we do not dare to remain silent. We carefully refer to the text of the [respective] regulation: 'For the posthumous titles of prince and duke, as well as official titles above the third grade, one in all cases puts a description of [the candidate's] conduct to the records of the application, which examines the successes and verifies them; this [application] is handed down to the Ritual Academy to draft a definitive version of the posthumous title, which then sends it up to the chancellery (*sheng*) to be discussed, finalized, and reported in a memorial.'

This serves the purpose of displaying absolute impartiality with respect to important titles and [the real] merits [they are tied to]. Your majesty in your sagely virtue are very forgiving, as forgiving as heaven and earth, you took pity on a minister who is an old acquaintance, and your great kindness is infinite. Because you know that Xia Song throughout his life did not accord with what many [people] expected, you did not want to entrust this task to the ones in charge, to be weighed in a public discussion, so that in future his shortcomings shall be hidden and his good deeds be brought to the foreground, therefore you have decided on the title in the inner palace, and then have proclaimed it outside.

We say that one still should have selected an average, middling title, causing it to roughly correspond with his conduct and [real] merits; if one had selected and granted that, that also would not have been something that the multitude of officials would have dared to dispute. Now however one has granted him the title *Wenzheng*, these two characters are the most splendid among the posthumous titles, there is nothing more to add to this. Even for the kind of talent of the Duke of Zhou one would not dare to select both, and in a case like the one of this Xia Song fellow, how could he be found worthy of that with any ease? This amounts to the title being in opposition to reality, [but a] posthumous title that is in contradiction to the [candidate's] conduct will be transmitted in eternity, how can this be considered a model? We humbly think that Your Majesty in all your astuteness and intelligence is not looking very far ahead, as to what Xia Song has done, how have you not heard that all the time? Yet, you still want to press for a splendid title, on account of a biased preference for granting a favor.

Although the officials at court and the great ministers do not dare to speak openly, [because they] fear the descendants of Xia Song, who just have taken on handsome positions, the eyes and ears of the people of the four directions are keenly paying attention, how can one hide this? They will say: 'Xia Song's conduct was like that, and he still is given the title *Wenzheng*, this [order] fails to consider titles to be an instrument of impartiality, it must have its origin in the favoritism of the Son of Heaven.' Their jeering comments on the shortcomings of the dynasty will be of this kind, how can one say that this is unimportant? It is precisely for this reason that we day and night hurry about, not daring to avoid a guilt worthy of execution, or the misfortune of reproach and enmity, and in a crazy fashion adopt wild words. We humbly beg that Your Majesty would be careful and have the grace to look into this, and change and bequeath a [different] posthumous title, which is more in accord with the opinion within and without [the court], and [can be] considered a model for the future generations. I and the others are extremely scared. We sincerely made this report and humbly await your order.⁶⁴⁸

In this memorial, there are in fact numerous elements and arguments that we have seen made by the 'good men' during and before *qingli* as well: Han Qi had pointed out the importance of

⁶⁴⁸ 論夏令公(疎)謚狀. QSW. vol. 54, j. 1176, p. 186-187. Liu Chang has a similar, but very short memorial (QSW. vol. 59, j. 1281, p. 123).

proper procedures to ensure that the right decisions were made, and both he and Ouyang Xiu had talked about the role of debate in the government process. We also see a general public at play here, the judgment of which is not to be taken lightly even by an emperor, and even if it is not expressed publicly (which Sima Guang purports to do). Once again the intricate relationship between the public and *gong* becomes apparent: while it is true that strictly speaking it must be translated as impartial here, juxtaposed with the personal preference and favoritism that Sima Guang criticizes, we also see that this duality is very much connected to the question whether the procedure that led to the decision was public or private in nature, and to the importance of displaying said impartiality to the broader public.⁶⁴⁹ Finally, we have the argument that a title (*ming* 名) must be connected to reality; if a known villain such as Xia Song were given a prestigious title, that would destroy the public image of this institution, and destroy its utility, as he will argue in the second memorial. Despite the fact that *ming* has to be translated as ‘title’ here, this reasoning in many ways reintroduces the *qingli* concept of reputation, because the problem is the discrepancy between the honor bestowed and what the public knows about the candidate in question. More generally this is not unlike the *guwen* argument that form and content should be connected, it just places the emphasis on the importance of the content, which the form was to reflect. The one new element here is the role of the self that Sima Guang posits: conduct emanates from the self, and hence titles (and reputation) come into being ‘in’ the person. We have not encountered this argument before in this form, and it seems that the answer to the need for a better, more intricate connection between form and content becomes most apparent here. The second memorial would be even more explicit about the importance of this connection, in fact in several ways: what makes Xia Song bad is that his words do not match his deeds, and

⁶⁴⁹ Bol also points to the role of *gong* in Sima Guang’s thinking (Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 149).

that his appearance was not in accord with his heart; in the same vein it would be disastrous to merely treat the title to be bestowed on Xia Song as ‘empty name/word’, and not try to have reality reflected in it, for it would deprive the ruler and the court of one of their more effective means to uphold the normative order:

Second memorial about Xia Song’s posthumous title

We recently on account of the conferral of the posthumous title *Wenzheng* to Xia Song submitted a memorial, begging to change it, and until today have not received an edict [in response]. We humbly are of the opinion that in terms of how to behave as an official, the salary received need not be plenty, and the position one is in need not be high, but if one is an official that fails to speak up, then one is someone who deserves punishment. Therefore, [although] we are afraid day and night we do not dare to remain silent. We only hope that Your Majesty will not on account of [our] lowly station disregard these words.

We humbly examine the original intent of the rules of conferring posthumous titles; when it says ‘someone of virtue and wide learning and erudition is called *wen*,’ then this does not refer to broad, indiscriminate learning, it must mean that in what one has learned and done one has not departed from the Way and virtue. The phrase ‘respectfully and cautiously he attended to his position, then he is called *zheng*,’ this has not the meaning of ‘weak willed, negligent, and thieving’, it must be following the quotation from the Book of Odes that says ‘respectfully and cautiously he attended to his position, how upright and straight is he.’

Now, Xia Song’s extravagance was excessive, in amassing illicit wealth he was insatiable; within he could not keep propriety in the women’s chambers, outside he was unable to render service at the border; his words did not match his deeds and his appearance did not match his heart; if one had to talk about his way and virtue, then it was merely ‘greedy and treacherous’, if one had to put his ‘uprightness’ into words, then it amounted to nothing but ‘pure evil’. This is what all and sundry in the realm have heard, it is nothing that we dare to make up. If Your Majesty now confers on him the posthumous title *Wenzheng*, then we are too stupid and do not realize the larger significance of it, [since] we have no idea with what posthumous title you henceforth will entreat the upright people and good *shi* of the realm.

The reason why Your Majesty commemorates Xia Song in this kind way is that he once was a minister in the eastern palace, [that is, when you were a crown prince]. He is not the only former minister of the eastern palace dying and getting posthumous titles in recent memory, and never has Your Majesty personally taken part in the decision. Only for Xia Song is that not true, but how could you not know that what Xia Song did was not in accord with the intention of the majority (*zhong*)? If Your Majesty considered Xia Song to be upright without doubt, then why would you not entrust the ones in charge with this, handing it over for public discussion? In fact Your Majesty hiding his shortcomings in this way is bound to make them obvious! [Instead,] as Your Majesty’s lavish commemoration Xia Song, nothing would be better than to foster his family handsomely.

As to the posthumous titles, it is what the former kings used to exhort the good and curb the bad, it is not a tool in practicing favoritism. Someone with a different opinion might consider the posthumous title an empty name, what harm would be in appropriating it for somebody? We beg to make an attempt at talking about its harms. All that the dynasty has to steer the ministers below is not more than misfortune and fortune, glory and dishonor, nothing else. If the one doing good receives his just fortune when alive, and his glory when he is dead, and the one not doing good meets his misfortune when alive and his humiliation when he is dead, then even if one intended the realm not to become ordered and secure, how would it be possible [to avoid that the realm became ordered and secure]? Yet, if there is an unruly official, who, when alive, steals his salary and position, and when dead undeservedly receives a glorious title, then the good will not know what is exhorted and the bad will not know what is to be feared. Good or bad is put upside down, and cannot be restored to order again. This is the harm it does, it can overcome the Way!

Yu Shu says: ‘cautious and conscientious, day after day the government duties are done.’ Kong Anguo comments: ‘it says that one ought to be fearful and watchful for the minute of the myriad things.’ Indeed, a problem that is still small, when managing it is easy to stop, yet when it is already fully developed, who would be able to bring it under control? In this case, the people of all under heaven all know that Xia Song has done extremely bad things, even if Your Majesty were conferring the title of *zheng* on him, it would not be enough to cover up his badness, and instead is bound to damage the [image of] absolute impartiality of the dynasty, and nothing else. That what makes the model of posthumous titles credible to later generations is making what is good into good [titles] and what is bad into bad ones without personal partiality. Today, to jeopardize that on behalf of one official will have the consequence that those loyal and good, talented and outstanding officials who receive a splendid posthumous title, will all come under suspicion from later generations; in that case, what use would the method of conferring posthumous titles have henceforth? The reason why we offend the heavenly might despite all our extreme insignificance, encountering the resentment of the family of the other [person], really is because we are distressed on behalf of the dynasty’s important method of advising [the good] and curbing [the bad], which cannot be diminished and abandoned with impunity. We hope that Your Majesty will take pity and investigate, and will graciously select to do as we have memorialized before, and change the bestowal of the posthumous name for Xia Song; then the realm would be fortunate indeed. We do not overcome our extreme fear.⁶⁵⁰

In Sima Guang’s argument, the very fact that the decision had not been made in the limelight of public procedure highlights the illicitness of the decision, and the problems with Xia Song’s character. Moreover, rather than being a minor problem with a title, misappropriating the posthumous honor in this way will make it meaningless as a tool to bring about good behavior, and as a reward for good officials. This is very much along the lines of the argument made by the ‘good men’, who also frequently pointed out that rewards and punishments needed to be connected to real deeds to be effective. As yet unbeknownst to him, Sima Guang in this way defended what, in an ironic, but probably not coincidental twist would become his own posthumous title against the misuse by an emperor who merely thought about his petty favoritism rather than the grand scheme of things. At times his line of argument borders on sarcasm, such as when he spells out for everyone to see what the language of the regulations means and does not mean. In many ways, this memorial could have been authored by one of the *qingli* protagonists, but for two things: the intricate connection to the inner self, and the fact that Fan Zhongyan is not known to have attacked people beyond their death. However, this

⁶⁵⁰ 論夏令公(疎)諡第二狀. QSW. vol. 54, j. 1176, p. 187-188.

vengeance beyond death in the interest of clearly differentiating the good and bad is reminiscent of Fu Bi's side of the argument with Ouyang Xiu discussed in the introduction; Fu also worries about the long-term effects of language that is not clear enough to make its case, an argument that probably was made around the same time; note also the reference in both texts to the family of the deceased that still occupies influential positions. In other words, even these differences can be considered to remain within the margins of opinion acceptable for 'good men'.

The part that is more unique to Sima Guang's thinking is the contention that even seemingly trivial and minimal changes for the worse in ritual, in this case ritual titles, can have very negative effects on the dynasty, an argument that Sima Guang would offer time and again, and which most certainly informed his opposition in the *puyi* question. In fact, it would be the main theme of 'Be Careful about Habits', the whole point of which was to warn the court not to continue with certain practices that constituted a departure from the dynastic procedures as laid down by the founders, departures that he feared would have very detrimental consequences if allowed to continue. This text has been discussed by other scholars, who have described the argument that it makes for the importance of the hierarchy of authority that Sima sees as the main product of ritual, a hierarchy that needs to be guarded carefully, to prevent people from getting in the habit of disregarding this ritual order.⁶⁵¹ On the other hand, an unchanged habit of ritual respect in fact could to a certain extent outweigh actual political weakness, as the examples of Zhou and Tang show, which were not overthrown despite the fact that their actual, hard power and might had been greatly diminished. The whole memorial argues against certain, seemingly

⁶⁵¹ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 221-222; "Government, Society, and State." p. 155. QSW. vol. 54, j. 1181, p. 269-273.

small changes in the hierarchical and institutional system that could have very detrimental, major consequences in the future. However, the following excerpt will show that even within this picture-perfect exposition of Sima Guang's thinking on ritual there in fact is a connection to an important part of the political program of the group that we have called the 'good men', and it also shows how this program could be made to fit Sima Guang's worldview. Here he is explaining how the founders of the Song had set up the institutional hierarchy that would successfully reunite all under heaven after the hierarchical failure of the late Tang Dynasty:

As a consequence, the difference between the Son of Heaven and the feudal lords was evident, and the source of sedition had been plugged. Thereupon the power of the military governors returned to the prefectures, the sub-commanders' powers reverted to the counties, [that is, the proper institutional entities in the hierarchy]. Moreover one divided all under heaven into more than ten circuits, and for each established a financial commissioner to inspect the merits and demerits (good and bad) of the body of officials in the prefectures, and reinstated the post of regional inspector of the Han, so that the orders of the court were certain to be implemented by the financial commissioners, the financial commissioners' orders without fail were implemented in the prefectures, the prefectures' orders without fail were implemented in the counties, and the county's orders always were implemented by the lower officials and the people. As a consequence, relations between above and below were as they should be, and the institutional system was established. Thereupon one proclaimed the military laws, and caused from the Discipline Officer upwards each (military official) to have a counterpart, in order to oversee and control each other; if there was a small infraction, the violators were all put to death. As a consequence the [civil] administration of the [military] rank and file was respected and the officers and officials obeyed orders. These all are the great regulations of ritual.⁶⁵²

What is curious here is the fact that part of what Sima Guang claims to have been the institutional set-up since the founding of the dynasty in fact constituted one of the core items in the program of the good men, that is, to establish a position in between the court and the lower ranks of local officials so that the court could better exercise its supervision over them; while it was more the expediency of the situation and previous suggestions by others that gave the role of overseers to the existing financial commissioners, this still became one of the core projects of the 'good men', and the one in which their failure to select the right men became most obvious. Related to that is the demand of the 'good men' to ensure that orders were heeded on all levels of

⁶⁵² QSW. vol. 54, j. 1181, p. 271.

the administration. It is not the time to go into details with the discrepancies in Sima Guang's account, suffice it to say that the 'Han regional inspector', *bucishi* 部刺史, was not reinstated in name, if anything it was used as a generic term for several kinds of circuit-level officials.⁶⁵³ In fact for all we know the founders had purposefully avoided to provide the financial commissioners with more jurisdiction and power than was barely necessary to fulfill their duties within the tax system, and otherwise made sure that the military and judicial functions at the circuit level were separated as well, precisely because they did not intend to have a gubernatorial element in their hierarchy, which could use the resources and power of such a large administrative unit to encroach on the supremacy of the court, as the military governors had done in Tang.⁶⁵⁴ Therefore, in fact, there was a gaping hole in the permanent administrative institutions of the dynasty, only barely filled by temporary, ad-hoc appointments of military commanders and overseers when the need arose, a situation which had been criticized by the 'good men' earlier. This short description should be sufficient to show that Sima Guang here exercised some, shall we say, flexibility with what the founders had decreed to fit his overall image of a unified hierarchy spanning all administrative levels. It is true that this does not constitute a direct endorsement of the program, or the original argument of the 'good men' that the financial commissioners were the same as the ancient regional inspection officials; however, Sima Guang in this way still ascribes quasi-constitutional rank to two core demands of the *qingli* reforms, and shows that his *Weltbild* as such is not sufficient to make him an opponent of one of the core parts of the reform.

⁶⁵³ See the Dictionary of Song Administrative System (Gong, *Songdai guan'zhi cidian*. index, p. 776), referring to the different offices that this could refer to as an alternative name.

⁶⁵⁴ See the short description in Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*. p. 45-46. Sima Guang in the same memorial actually argues against relaxing some of these stipulations of the founders regarding pacifying commissioners.

The following excerpt gives testimony that this flexibility was not just a coincidental phenomenon in Sima Guang's pre-*xining* political writings, for a case that is even more striking than the one above:

As to economic and fiscal matters, they are urgent tasks for the realm; the fact that today they are in dire straits such as this, and that the chancellors are not considering them to be a source of worry, in all likelihood is because they fail to see it as part of their official duties. I wish that one would reestablish the office of supreme commissioner of accounts, and have a chancellor lead it; all the [matters regarding] gold, silk, money, and grain in the realm, whether under the jurisdiction of the financial commission or not, such as the likes of the 'palace storehouse' etc., all should come under the jurisdiction of the commissioner of accounts. For small matters a solution is exclusively recommended [to the executive] by the office heads, but important matters first are planned by the commissioner of accounts, then implemented; at the end of a year one then hands [these offices'] accounts of income and expenses to the commissioner of accounts, and he checks if the income matches the expenses. [Here Sima Guang provides the specifics for the operation of the new office, which was also supposed to supervise all the officials that headed financial offices.] Someone offering a diverging opinion in all probability will say that the chancellors are to contemplate how to govern the country in a general sense, thereby harmonizing *yin* and *yang*, [that is, they exclusively deal with the grand scheme of things], they should not oversee financial offices; yet, these are all the words of stupid people who do not know the fundamental principles of governing a country. [There follows a number of ancient and historic examples up to the Tang Dynasty.] At the beginning of the [Song] Dynasty one also drew on the chancellors to jointly oversee the financial and other commissioners. From this follows that from antiquity until today finances always were under the jurisdiction of the chancellors. Today the redaction of [Buddhist?] canonical scriptures is also under the supervision of the chancellors, how can it be that the important administration of the economy and finances is considered not to be a matter for the chancellors? [...]⁶⁵⁵

Once more, Sima Guang for the sake of his goal of a unified hierarchy took some liberties with the intention of the founders. While the office of supreme commissioner of accounts did exist briefly between 993–994 as a stage of development for the financial commission,⁶⁵⁶ for all we know the Song founders again quite intentionally took both financial and military power from the jurisdiction of the chancellors, and established separate administrations for these tasks. It cannot be excluded that a chancellor could hold a concurrent post in the financial commission,⁶⁵⁷ but in terms of the institutional set-up of the dynasty, the complicated institutional history of the financial commission with its recurring divisions and reunifications, if anything speaks to the

⁶⁵⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 196, p. 4745-4756.

⁶⁵⁶ Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*. p. 530, no. 7088.

⁶⁵⁷ Which Wang Dan seemed to have (Skonicki, "Employing the Right Kind of Men." p. 56).

distrust that the founders had for an accumulation of financial jurisdiction in one hand.⁶⁵⁸ So when Sima Guang here calls for the ‘return’ of a financial administrative unit that would allow the chancellors to exercise control over the financial administration as a whole, and formulate global policies for financial issues, then this shows how much license he is willing to take to fit the intention of the founders to his ideas of a coherent hierarchy. The other point is that this passage also throws a new light on the debate about Wang Anshi’s financial planning commission, a tool which allowed the chancellor Wang Anshi to take charge of financial policies in the realm, and without interference implement his own suggestions for this area of government. This was heavily criticized by Sima Guang, a fact that was interpreted mainly from the perspective of their ideological differences, as one in many ways that these differences found their expression in concrete policy debates. After all, Wang was arguing for a unified order, while Sima Guang still insisted on the demarcations between the different parts of his ‘building’.⁶⁵⁹ Indeed, it is true that here and in the *Wan yan shu* we already see passages that foreshadow the future argument between them, since Sima Guang sees his financial administration as a tool to match revenue and expenses, and cut the latter if necessary, whereas Wang Anshi in his very brief statement on this topic insists that the problem is not a lack of wealth in the realm, but a failure to administer it properly.⁶⁶⁰ Wang in the 1058 memorial also already uses the word *li*, ‘profit’, if not in a very prominent place, which by his detractors would later be interpreted as ‘profiteering’; moreover it is plausible that he had already made other,

⁶⁵⁸ Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*. p. 401-402, no. 4912.

⁶⁵⁹ Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 177.

⁶⁶⁰ QSW. vol. 63, j. 1380, p. 328-343. Williamson, *Wang An shih*. vol. 1, p. 68.

more radical statements, elsewhere.⁶⁶¹ Yet, the fact of the matter still is that Wang in his most important pre-*xining* proclamation remains very vague and noncommittal about how to do that exactly beyond adopting the right ‘way’ to administer the finances, whereas Sima Guang proposes a concrete measure, deviating from what we know about the intentions of the founders, and in a way that very closely resembled what the financial planning commission would later do, with its unified control over the financial administration in the realm. Sima Guang is very vague on the question if it is only one, or all the chancellors that are supposed to lead the new office, which shows at the very least that at this point he was not very troubled by the fear that this set-up could be misused. In other words, what has been interpreted as a largely ideological debate about the significance of a specific institutional measure, in this light becomes a political dispute that only occurred when it became clear that Wang Anshi used a very similar institutional set-up, if with a different name, as his personal tool to exclusively implement his own ideas, staffing it with officials he considered loyal, and in this way bypassed regular administration and oversight by the other chancellors. This is not a trivial difference, for two reasons: firstly, it shows that there was the potential for common ground in institutional questions between Sima Guang and Wang Anshi at this time in spite of their ideological differences, supporting the argument that it was less important what these differences were, than how these differences were treated by the actors at each step in their interaction. Put differently, it is the step from ambiguity to its absence that marked the change in their relationship. Secondly, the fact that from his perspective Wang Anshi abused the system in this way could have caused Sima Guang to accept the reasoning behind the set-up of the founders, and change the way his *Weltbild* translated into practical policies, making it more radically ‘conservative’ in the process. While it would turn out that this

⁶⁶¹ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 423n16.

common ground between Sima Guang and Wang Anshi was merely a potential, this fact is still significant as such for our understanding of what happened, for in this way, that is, a catch-22 of politics and ideology that would lead to ever more uncompromising, pronounced positions, the development of their enmity is explained better and in a more plausible way, rather than by considering it as the seemingly inevitable catastrophe of a collision between two fully developed, fully radicalized worldviews.

The remaining two texts will help to explore the question if there was the potential for common ground between Sima Guang and the *qingli* ‘good men’ on the topic of ritual as well, despite their ideological differences. Once more, the question of the proper ritual differentiation between different ranks is at the heart of a memorial in which Sima Guang protests the fact that the Empress Cao and some court ladies had received promotions for the same three generations of their ancestors, a practice that failed to reflect the difference in rank between them. The central statement shows that already at this time in 1062 Sima Guang considered ritual as a tool to highlight the differences in a given, fixed hierarchy, and that even seemingly small changes could have detrimental consequences: “What one has to be meticulous with when it comes to ritual, is the differentiation of eminent and base, so as to discriminate what is mixed up, and make obvious what otherwise would just be a subtlety.”⁶⁶² As he explains, it is important to clearly differentiate between the two ranks of empress and court lady, given that they live in such close proximity, to ensure that there is proper order between them. On the other hand the differentiation between court ladies and court ministers is less important, and therefore it is not

⁶⁶² QSW. vol. 54, j. 1183, p. 299. The last part of the sentence is a *Liji* quote. *Liji* 禮記 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. 重刊宋本禮記注疏附校勘記. j. 21, p. 422-1. “是故禮者君之大柄也, 所以別嫌明微[...].”

necessarily a problem that the ladies would then be ranked lower than the ministers. While on one hand this memorial clearly is informed by the strict view on ritual that we have seen to be at the heart of Sima Guang's worldview, it is also noticeable that here he still offers some form of negotiation between the different ritual demands, and also concedes that the differentiation need not be as strict in cases where the difference is apparent anyway, such as between court ladies and ministers who ordinarily had no direct contact with each other. This is of course to counter an argument made, or potentially made, by others about his ritual suggestion, but it still remains a fact that this constitutes a kind of negotiation between the demands of a coherent, global ritual court hierarchy as a whole on one hand, and clarifying a local hierarchical distinction on the other. Sima Guang comes down on the side of the latter, and negates the overarching importance of the former in this specific case, even if he makes some suggestions how to deal with this potential criticism.

In the discussion so far we have mixed up and treated two different things as essentially the same: visions of coherent and unambiguous ritual, and institutional hierarchies, which, however, were considered related by Sima Guang himself, as we shall realize shortly. We have shown that these very much existed in Sima Guang's writings before *puyi*, but we have also seen that the way he argued for them was not as radical and rigid as he would do during the *puyi* dispute and beyond; most importantly, these texts provide evidence that at this point his primary source of legitimacy, the institutions of the founders, was used in a flexible way that was not, in fact, reflecting the intentions of the founders very well, and instead allowed him to stake out some common ground with some aspects of both the *qingli* reform and Wang Anshi. In other words, we see the nucleus of what Seligman et al. would call the sincere mode of thought, but it has not yet developed into

that rigid ideology that we have described in the introduction.⁶⁶³ In similar ways, the public of ‘all under heaven’ has an important part to play in Sima Guang’s argument, and in fact Sima Guang here and later would frequently invoke the point of view of *zhong* 衆, here translated as majority, to underline the legitimacy of his claim, and in this way as well would develop an old claim of the ‘good men’ into a slightly new direction.

The following, last text constitutes the very beginning of the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, the annalistic work of history that played an important role as an exposition of Sima Guang’s own response to the questions of the world, including those of contemporary politics during *xining*. It would seem that this opening statement was handed in as part of a different, earlier work, the ‘Comprehensive Treatise’, in 1066, and was later incorporated into the *Zizhi tongjian*.⁶⁶⁴ This date would make it very likely that as a whole or in parts it constituted a direct response and

⁶⁶³ Philip Clart in his article on Sima Guang’s concept of ritual in effect describes his ‘sincere’ view of ritual, without, of course, calling it that. At the same time he shows how closely Sima Guang’s view of ritual was related to the idea of *renqing*, through a text in which Sima Guang in my view referred to, and also refuted what we have described as the *qingli* interpretation of the connection between ritual and sentiments (情辨. QSW. vol. 56, j. 1220, p. 163-164). The point is that sentiment and the way are the same, and so the mourner who follows proper ritual never is insincere, for at each point in the process of mourning he has the tool to express and at the same time bring about the proper inner state, and the singular is decisive here. It is not the case that there is a need for the Way to overcome the (proper) feeling of the mourner, for even the extreme sentiment of someone who just has lost a child has its proper place and time, and its proper ritual expression (Philip Clart, “The Concept of Ritual in the Thought of Sima Guang,” in: Dieter Kuhn, Helga Stahl (eds.), *Perceptions of Antiquity in Chinese Civilization*. Heidelberg: edition forum, 2008. p. 237-252, p. 248-249). Given the importance of the *renqing* concept in *puyi*, and the potential of this text to be interpreted as allowing Yingzong a legitimate expression for the sentiment towards his natural father, I doubt that this text could have been written during or after that without a comment referring to the dispute. If correct, this would be another indicator for a change in Sima Guang’s thinking about ritual that was fueled by political events. For the *qingli* ritualists we have discussed above there is no indication that the legitimate diversity of human sentiments needs to be changed into one unified inner state, instead, ritual time and again gives the diverse sentiments a regulated outer form that in this way serves to regulate society and make it coherent. In another text discussed by Clart, dated to 1071, Sima Guang argues that the function of the pitch-pot game is to show who has the correct inner state, which we have called ‘sincere’, and at the same time serves to train people to be so (p. 244-246).

⁶⁶⁴ For some textual history and the significance of these historical works, see: Bol, “Government, Society, and State.” p. 157-160. See also: *This Culture of Ours*. p. 233-246. I am very much indebted to the translation of the following text provided in the latter.

theoretical grounding of Sima Guang's position in the ritual *pu*-dispute, which at that point still was in its last, waning stages.⁶⁶⁵ As such, it might appear a bit anachronistic to draw on it in a discussion of Sima Guang's pre-*puyi* thinking, and repeat a problematic move made by others, who use the *Zizhi tongjian* extensively to discuss what they see as the constant system of thought and political action throughout Sima Guang's life.⁶⁶⁶ Yet in my case the argument is that there was some common ground with earlier 'good men' arguments on ritual, and it would be very relevant if it were possible to find such commonalities or overlap even in a later statement such as this, which clearly was politically motivated and directed against the remaining *qingli* 'good men's' position on this topic. It is not a coincidence that the narrative starts with a seemingly irrelevant event, which however for Sima Guang marks the small beginning of the breakdown of the old Zhou ritual order:

For the first time one installed the senior officials of Jin, Wei Si, Zhao Ji, and Han Qian, as feudal lords. I say: I have heard that of the duties of the Son of Heaven none is more important than ritual, of rituals none is more important than those that differentiate, and of those that differentiate none is more important than the title. What is meant by ritual? It is none other than the institutional fabric. What is meant by differentiation? That is none other than [the differentiation] between sovereign and subject. What is meant by title? That is none other than dukes, lords, chancellors, and senior officials.⁶⁶⁷

What captures the eye here is the word *fen* 分, and the implications it has for Sima Guang's idea of ritual. For him, the most important task of ritual is to divide people into upper and lower, and to keep them in place all by themselves, without much use of force. When looking back at what

⁶⁶⁵ This is a connection made by Christian Meyer. *Ritendiskussionen*. p. 502. Here this part is dated to 1063, however, slightly before the dispute.

⁶⁶⁶ As Ji Xiao-bin frequently does in his discussion of Sima Guan's Conservatism (Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. p. 35-60). Ji of course makes very clear that the texts are from different times, yet he still uses this discussion as a stepping stone and underpinning for the narrative of the political actions of Sima Guang, which was consistent with his system of thought for most of his life, although he notices that this is less true for the last months of his life, that is, precisely the time that Sima Guang for the first time found himself in the executive position to implement his ideas (p. 60). This assumption of coherence makes it hard to discuss possible changes and developments in this thought.

⁶⁶⁷ Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. j. 1, p. 2. (equivalent to Guji chubanshe, 1956 edition).

we have identified as the core concept of ritual held by the good men, *jie* was the significant word, conventionally translated as ‘regulating’, but we have pointed out that the meaning also embodies ideas such as ‘node’ or ‘joint’ which are at the same time connecting and differentiating things. Overall, the emphasis of the earlier thinkers was on the connecting function, while at the same time keeping ritual separate from other concepts, material objects, and from the inner self. In Sima Guang’s ritual thinking it is incorporated into a unified order, which remains unified by virtue of the fact that ritual provides and holds in place the distinctions that keep that socio-political order afloat, which otherwise would be difficult to maintain in a space as vast and as populated as the realm, and in a political system where delegation of authority is indispensable. He explains:

Given the vastness of all land between the four seas, and the multitude of the people, which are under the control of one person, although one might have unsurpassed strength, and wisdom surpassing all in one’s generation, there [still] is no one who would not [have to] delegate things to and enlist the services of others, how other than with ritual would one provide the institutional framework for that? Therefore the Son of Heaven orders the three dukes, the three dukes lead the feudal lords, the feudal lords control the chancellors and senior officials, the chancellors and senior officials govern the noble and the common people. The eminent will oversee the humble, and the humble will subject themselves to the eminent. The ones above ordering the ones below is much like the torso moving its arms and legs, the root and stem controlling the branches and leaves. The ones below serving the ones above is much like the arms and legs guarding the torso, the branches and the leaves protecting the root and stem, only in this way can above and below safeguard each other and the dynasty be in good order. Therefore I said that of the duties of the Son of Heaven none is greater than ritual.⁶⁶⁸

Given the prominent part that the word *fen* plays here, translated as differentiation, there can be no question that this text has a different overall take on the function of ritual than what we have seen for the *qingli* ‘good men’. Yet, the following passage shows that this relationship is more complicated than a mere difference of opinion:

When King Wen put the *Yijing* in order, he put the trigrams for heaven and earth (*qian* 乾, *kun* 坤) first. Kongzi referred to that saying: reverence such as that towards heaven and humility such as that of earth, are determined by [the cosmological order represented by] these trigrams. Humility and reverence thus are set out, and the eminent and humble get their position. He said that the positions of ruler and subject are much like heaven and earth, which cannot be changed [in terms of hierarchy]. The *Chunqiu* curbed the feudal lords and paid homage to the royal court,

⁶⁶⁸ *Zizhi tongjian* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. j. 1, p. 2-3.

although the king's yeomen were insignificant,⁶⁶⁹ they still were placed above the feudal lords in the hierarchy, in this way one sees that the sage had thought very deeply about the [clear] delineation between ruler and subject. Unless there is something like the cruelty of Jie and Zhou, and the humaneness of Tang and Wu, to which the people submitted, and which heaven endowed with the mandate, the differentiation between ruler and minister ought to be upheld to the end and in death, and that is that. Therefore had Weizi supplanted Zhou, this would have made sure that Tang would continue to be conjoined with heaven [in the sacrifices, that is, the dynasty had continued], had one drawn on Li Zha to be the ruler of Wu, [the founder of the state] Tai Bo would have continued to receive sacrifices, yet, the fact that the two would rather have the state perish and did not act, certainly is because the great regulating (*dajie* 大節) [fabric] of ritual cannot be undermined. Therefore I say that when it comes to ritual there is nothing more important than its differentiating function.⁶⁷⁰

This passage refers to the same two trigrams for 'heaven' and 'earth' that Fan Zhongyan draws on towards the end of the *fu*-poem 'Grand Ritual provides integrating regulation (*jie*) to heaven and earth', which also revolves around a perceived connection between ritual and cosmological phenomena. To remind us, the introductory statement of the *fu*-poem reads:

Grand Ritual provides integrating regulation (*jie*) to heaven and earth

Only the regulating (*jie*) property of grand ritual integrates [entities as different as] heaven and earth, and is observable. Its greatness is that it permeates the normative principles of all kinds of things, its regulating (*jie*) consists in inscribing the grid within which the myriad changes take place. The eminent and humble are being thoroughly differentiated, it provides a line-up to the high and the low without ambiguity; expanding and contracting are in tacit correlation with each other, it controls joy and sorrow and then there is constancy. [...] ⁶⁷¹

When placed side by side we see that, much like Sima Guang, Fan proposes a hierarchy, and an institutional framework, or grid, (*jigang*) that is provided by ritual, which leads to constancy and a hierarchy without ambiguities; even the word *fen*, differentiation, appears in this passage. We should also remind ourselves that Fan Zhongyan for certain political issues drew on the same argument, such as when he insisted that the emperor should not be made to pay homage to the empress dowager together with the court officials, and quoted the same trigrams to make his point.⁶⁷² In fact, Fan says there that "the implements and title of the ruler are fixed by the

⁶⁶⁹See gloss for 王人 in HYDC (vol. 4, p. 453): 周王室之微官。《春秋·莊公六年》：“六年春正月，王人子突救衛。”杜預注：“王人，王之微官也，雖官卑，而見授以大事，故稱人而又稱字。”王人衛王命，後因以指天子使臣。

⁶⁷⁰ *Zizhi tongjian* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. j. 1, p. 3-4.

⁶⁷¹大禮與天地同節賦. QSW. vol. 18, j. 368, p. 41.

⁶⁷² QSW. vol. 18, j. 381, p. 291.

trigrams of heaven and earth.” While I would uphold my original argument that overall Fan’s *fu* talks more about the connecting function of ritual than the differentiating one, and that Fan Zhongyan generally had a more inclusive idea of ritual than Sima Guang, in this and the next passage we see that Sima Guang very much operates within Fan Zhongyan’s frame of discourse, he merely puts his emphasis on one aspect, whereas Ouyang Xiu had emphasized the other. It is hardly conceivable that the reference to the *Yijing* trigrams for heaven and earth is a coincidence here, given the high visibility of Fan Zhongyan and his legacy among this type of literati, after all, the whole point of the Fan’s letter to Yan Shu had been for it to be circulated. In other words, Sima Guang in all probability here is quoting an argument made by Fan Zhongyan, the leader of the *qingli* ‘good men’, back at the remaining *qingli* protagonists, Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu, to make his point and make them see the error of their ways. It is true that the practical suggestion that Fan backed up with this argument had been to have separate rituals to meet the legitimate demands of both the empress mother and the emperor, but he still defended the imperial hierarchy in this way, and thus could be argued to have the same goal. When Sima Guang continues this reasoning, it becomes clear that for him, the accoutrements and titles of power are indivisible from their specific meaning as expressions of a differentiated hierarchy, or in other words, ritual form is intricately connected to its ritual content, and the title is the most important of all:

As to ritual, it distinguishes the eminent and humble, it gives a hierarchy to those who are intimately [related], or only remotely so, it curtails the multitude of material things and brings order to the general affairs; if it wasn’t for titles, [ritual differentiation] would not become apparent, if it wasn’t for accoutrements, [ritual differentiation] would not take form; the title serves to mandate it, and the accoutrements are used to distinguish it, and as a consequence above and below have a clear-cut hierarchy, this is the great constant Way of ritual. Once the [order of] titles and accoutrements has perished, then how can ritual continue to exist on its own! Of old when Zhong Shu accrued merit in the defense of Xi, he declined the households (that is, the position that finds its expression in the number of households awarded) bequeathed on him and instead asked for tassels (as sign of increased rank); Kongzi was of the opinion that this was inferior to giving him more households. Only the title is granted the respective accoutrements, they cannot be given to men [at will]; his is what the ruler is in charge of, when policing [of ritual titles and accoutrements] is gone, then the state and dynasty will follow suit. The ruler of Wei waited on Kongzi to bring about [good] government, and Kongzi wanted to first rectify the titles, or names, assuming that when the titles are not in order, then the people have nothing to hold on to. As to tassels, it is but a minor thing, yet Confucius valued it;

rectifying the titles is a trifling matter, yet Confucius put it first. This certainly is because if the titles and accoutrements are already in disarray, then above and below have no way to safeguard each other.

As to problems, there is none that do not start as a small thing, and then become apparent; the plan of the sage is long term, therefore he will be able to take precautions against these small beginnings and nip them in the bud; the perceptiveness of the majority [*zhong*] is short term, therefore they can only wait for it to become fully apparent and then have to salvage [the situation]. If one reins it in when it is small, then the effort expended is small, and the success is manifold; when [the situation has] to be salvaged when it has taken full form, then one expends all one's strength and cannot achieve it. The *Yijing* saying 'treading on frost hails the arrival of solid ice', and the Shujing saying 'one day, two days, myriad things to do' make a case in point. Therefore I say that among [rituals that serve to] differentiate there is nothing more important than titles.⁶⁷³

Now, the earlier good men would not have said that these forms are completely arbitrary, and also drew on them to get at the intention of the sages, but, as argued before, this was not a firm connection, and some process of negotiation was necessary to fit the ritual to the needs of the situation. In the following passage, Sima Guang provides the reasoning for his own, more radical stance, in which a general normative demand for state hierarchies gets pride of place over any negotiation:

Alas! When You and Li let go of [the royal] virtue, the way of the Zhou declined increasingly, the institutional fabric was broken up and destroyed, those below had royal aspirations and those above were supplanted, the feudal lords entirely usurped military power, and that led to the likes of King Zhuang of Chu and Fu Chai of Wu. The grand ministers usurped government, the important forms of ritual were approximated in the funerals of all and sundry, yet the fact that the order of sacrifices for Kings Wen and Wu still went on unbroken must be the reason why the descendants of Zhou were able to still preserve their title and distinction. Why do I say that? Of old Duke Jin of Wen had accrued great merits with the royal house, and asked of King Xiang [to be allowed] a *sui* tomb way, but King Xiang did not allow it, saying: 'it is a royal symbol.' When no-one has succeeded to the royal virtue yet, and there is a second king, then that is a situation that you, uncle, also would find loathsome. In case that is not true, you, my uncle, have the land to build a *sui* tomb way, then why do you still ask? Duke Wen got afraid after that, and did not dare to violate [the order].

Therefore, despite the fact that the land of the Zhou royal domain was not larger than Cao or Teng, and the population of the Zhou [royal domain] was not more numerous than Zhu and Ju, the era [of the Zhou Dynasty] lasted for hundreds of years, and the lineage ruled over all under heaven; what is the reason why, despite commanding the strength of Jin, Chu, Qi, and Qin, the [rulers of these states] did not dare to increase (their own status)? It was only because [the order of] titles and distinctions still existed. That [reasoning] also extends to the presence of the Qi clan in Lu, of Tian Chang in Qi, of Duke Bai in Chu, and Earl Zhi in Jin, in all cases their power was sufficient to expel the ruler and rule themselves, but the fact of the matter is that to the end they did not dare to do it; why would it be that their ample strength was not up to the task and their mind could not bear it after all? It is because they feared if they betrayed the title and violated that differentiation they would be censored by all under heaven.

Now, [at the point of the first entry above,] the Jin senior officials betrayed and scorned their ruler, cut apart the state of Jin, the Son of Heaven already was not in a position to dispatch a punitive force, but to make matters worse

⁶⁷³ *Zizhi tongjian* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. j. 1, p. 4.

he also bestowed an official rank on them, making a precedent out of them for the feudal lords, and therefore henceforth the most insignificant of the titles and distinctions could not be upheld and had to be given up altogether. The ritual of the former kings had run its course with this. Some might think that at a time like this, when the [the power of the] Zhou ruling house was miniscule, and the three Jin were at the height of their power, although they wanted to forbid it, how could they have succeeded with that! This is greatly untrue! Although the three Jin were strong, if they had paid no heed to the denouncement of all under heaven when going against righteousness and usurping ritual, then they would not have asked the Son of Heaven and would have enthroned themselves. Had they not asked the Son of Heaven and enthroned themselves, then they would have become rebellious subjects, if the realm had rulers of the likes of Huan and Wen, they necessarily would have upheld ritual and righteousness and undertaken a military campaign against them.

But at this point they asked the Son of Heaven for his approval, and he granted the request, in this way they received the mandate from the Son of Heaven and became feudal lords, who would have had the license to hold them accountable for that? Therefore, with the precedent of the three Jin granted to the feudal lords, it was not the three Jin destroying the ritual [order], but the Son of Heaven himself who did that. Alas, after the ritual of ruler and minister had been destroyed, then all under heaven used wisdom and power to exercise hegemony over each other, subsequently forcing the successors of the sages and worthies to become something like the feudal lords, there was not one of the stately sacrifices that was not lost forever, but also those kinds [of ritual] for the people were almost completely destroyed, how is that not lamentable?⁶⁷⁴

This passage touches directly on the reason why Sima Guang cannot accept any compromise in the question of the ritual status of the Prince of Pu that would in any way infringe on the ritual rights of Emperor Renzong. In his view, even a minor infraction such as this would have tremendous consequences for the ritual fabric that holds the dynasty together, and would let go of the Song's potential of becoming an eternal dynasty, thereby dooming it to fail at some point sooner or later. Yet, while it cannot be emphasized enough that Sima Guang's thought on ritual indeed was different and had been different from the beginning, even in this text, which most probably constituted an argument guided by the *puyi* dispute, the connection to the discursive field of the 'good men' is still noticeable. It is not just connected in a general, Foucauldian sense, in whose framework the name of the author is used for reference only, but which otherwise purports to disengage itself from him and his intention.⁶⁷⁵ Instead, Sima Guang's argument can

⁶⁷⁴ *Zizhi tongjian* (online version). *Scripta Sinica*. j. 1, p. 4-6.

⁶⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens* [Archeology of Knowledge]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981. p. 44, 178. When reading *Archeology of Knowledge*, several points of the framework that Foucault develops there resonate with what has been attempted in this study, both for social relationships and for intellectual change, especially regarding the very nuanced way of recognizing difference and continuity that he describes, and his argument against the tendency to explain away discontinuity and breaks to be able to uphold the larger structural framework (e.g. p. 242-

be linked to concrete, central texts in which the denizen of the ‘good men’, Fan Zhongyan, laid out his project and argument. In this way, without changing that much from the framework of terms, references and ideas that have been left behind by this *guwen* thinker, especially given that what has been translated as ‘reputation’ and ‘title’ is in fact the same word, if not the same meaning, Sima Guang has made the step from an interpretation of ritual that has the potential to change its form to time and again overcome the fragmentation of this post-classical world by negotiating the different demands, to one that puts a, formally and normatively unchangeable, ritual order at the center of the sages’ efforts to keep everything in place.

Within our framework, this is a shift from a ritual to a sincere mode of thought. It is imperative here to emphasize that this difference is on one hand fundamental for the purpose of our general framework of ritual and sincerity, since it represents precisely the step from a ritual to a sincere interpretation of ritual that was diagnosed by Seligman et al. to be at the heart of the problem that they see for the modern world; to reiterate, they criticize that modern interpretations of ritual are in fact made part and parcel of the sincere vision of a coherent, meaningful world, if they are not dismissed outright as meaningless.⁶⁷⁶ If they are right that modernity is merely a question of the degree to which these interpretations have become prevalent and overbearing in our times, then we should be able to find these interpretations at different times and places too, and be able to recognize the same prevalence of sincere interpretations of ritual. On the other hand, it seems to

247). However, the main difference is that here the intentions (and the plural is decisive here) of the author are discussed as they come up in these texts, while at the same time keeping in mind the limitations that the sources place on us in this respect. For this author, history is still about people, even individuals, and despite all problems that come with the concept of intentions, it appears a bit artificial to, as Foucault does, refer to a host of figures in the history of science by name, and still claim that this is merely a name and reference, without placing any significance on the “*cogito*” behind it (p. 178).

⁶⁷⁶ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 128, 179-180.

me that judging by Sima Guang's writings, this existing difference of opinion *before* Yingzong's accession is not fundamental enough to make a break between the actors inevitable and automatic, given a shared frame of reference and common political goals. In other words, despite the noticeable difference in interpretation of ritual we are not suggesting that it merely should take the place of the more general ideological differences that hitherto were the basis for positing clearly defined factions based on ideology. Ouyang Xiu had always been willing to incorporate other, more radical 'good men' into his circle, and for Sima Guang there was no need to oppose Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu until there was a concrete ideological reason for it, brought about by *political* developments; in fact, there is reason to believe that he either toned down his statements before *puyi*, or that the more radical interpretation and re-phrasing of his ideas was a reaction to that dispute.

Whatever may have been the case, rather than predetermining a political conflict, Sima Guang's pre-*puyi* statements bear the potential for political cooperation with Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu. However, as we will see in the next chapter this point is anything but counterfactual, for there is concrete evidence for such a political cooperation, namely the campaign lobbying Emperor Renzong to appoint an heir, which will be the topic of the next chapter. In fact, as we will see, much more than with other cases of political campaigns, in this one we have sources that quite explicitly describe how this cooperation was organized behind the scenes in some way or other. The conclusion to take from this chapter thus is that different ideologies still are the key to understand the later conflict, but that these ideologies in and by themselves are not static and unchangeable, nor unconnected to the *qingli* claims; without considering the political factors that

exacerbated them these ideological differences in and of themselves fail to explain the disputes that would follow.

Chapter 3. A political alliance and two reluctant emperors: the campaign for the adoption and accession of Yingzong

In the first chapter of this second part, we drew a contradictory picture: on one hand, we saw that through the reach of the social connections of good men such as Ouyang Xiu, the general ideas of this group had spread among literati as well, to the point where many and quite diverse actors made similar, or at least compatible arguments, for better or for worse, sincere or not. Even more than in *qingli*, acting ‘good’ in a public manner had become a staple of political advancement, to the point where debaters started to question the sincerity of some of the ritualized behavior that the *qingli* good men had drawn on so heavily to make their point. On the other hand, the political scene would become very fragmented; according to the analysis that Wang Anshi and others offered at the time, this was due to the censors acting in a disruptive fashion, the executive ministers either being cowards or usurping power for their own purposes, and, more importantly, due to the fact that the emperor was still not taking the activist stand in all decisions, but especially in the selection of personnel. Much like in the 1040s, the public contributions to the debate therefore gave the emperor a pivotal role in the desired betterment of the state and society. While we do not have to agree with the judgemental, polemic aspects of these reports, we can still assume that they were not completely unfounded.

This chapter now will qualify these findings to some extent, by describing one remarkably stable, if temporary, political association that did exist within this chaotic political situation, a group of officials that had one clearly defined common political goal, and ran an orchestrated campaign to attain it; while we will for the most part only be able to discuss the public manifestations of this strategic plan, there is evidence for a less public side to it taking place in the backrooms of power at court, an aspect that will only be visible in the dispersed ripples that these non-public acts created on the surface of the record. The plan of arranging the adoption and accession of Yingzong might appear limited, but we shall see that the hold that the ‘good men’ that supported it would have over the future emperor and his successors in fact increased the chances that their kind would be selected for influential political offices; in other words, much like the institutional *qingli* reforms, the recognition of like-minded literati, and administering the exams, this was another attempt to solve the main problem from another angle that the ‘good men’ still almost unequivocally identified as the cause of the current ills, namely the fact that their kind was not dominant enough in government. It is the realization that virtually all later participants of *puyi* were part of this alliance that gives it a special significance, for it is this previous cooperation that would cause the subsequent debate (*puyi*) to be fraught with a sense of personal responsibility for the outcome of this adoption, a sentiment that would explain the fierceness of the dispute, for the same literati who earlier had persuaded Renzong to adopt Yingzong would later debate among themselves whether or not the status of Renzong as Yingzong’s parent was divisible between him and Yingzong’s natural father.

Fan Zhen is generally credited with being the first official to publicly call for the emperor to establish an heir,⁶⁷⁷ and was doing so in the most fervent fashion, by handing in up to twenty memorials to that effect within a few months, starting in 5/1056.⁶⁷⁸ As reasons he gave public opinion, but also the recent floods, both of which we see recurring in several other of these memorials.⁶⁷⁹ Already here we are told how the current chancellor Wen Yanbo used Cai Ting to establish contact with Fan, and ask why he had not planned this together with the executive officials.⁶⁸⁰ While the first passage thus purports that there was no collaboration before that, we see how such cooperation worked, especially given that this was the first memorial of twenty that Fan Zhen handed in. Moreover, there are extant letters to the chancellors, in which Fan Zhen implores them to act swiftly on the matter, in spite of treacherous words already pouring in from lesser people, because it would not get any easier to go through with the ‘important plan’ at a later stage.⁶⁸¹

Zhao Bian’s contribution followed suit, as well as a memorial by Sima Guang’s on that topic, which contains several passages which are representative of the arguments in this campaign, and

⁶⁷⁷ *Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 21-22. According to this account, Sima Guang continued the campaign, and Han Qi finally secured the approval of emperor and empress. Note that sporadically these calls appear much earlier, in different constellations; we should remind ourselves that Fan Zhongyan had been accused of similar machinations in the 1030s, see above. One extant earlier request dates to 3/1055, and was made by Pang Ji (QSW. vol. 17, j. 366, p. 419).

⁶⁷⁸ First memorial: CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4407-08. QSW. vol. 40, j. 865-6, p. 206-208, 209, 211-216, 218-220.

⁶⁷⁹ In the latter case he himself before that had called on the emperor to ask for public opinion on how to respond to the disasters (CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4416).

⁶⁸⁰ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4408. Fan Zhen answers that he was prepared to bear the consequences, and did not want to be stopped midway with his proposal should the executive officials disagree.

⁶⁸¹ QSW. vol. 40, j. 868, p. 248-249.

in fact foreshadow the future *puyi* conflict (6/1056).⁶⁸² Sima Guang describes the insecurity and fear of the general public in the realm in view of Renzong's recent illness, since all knew that he had not established an heir. "It must be that if one gets the right person, then order follows, if one fails to get the right person, chaos is the consequence; if it is decided in advance to set [the heir] apart [ritually] (*fen*), then there is peace, if it is not decided in advance, then there is chaos."⁶⁸³ He suggested that one select a good clansman, or in his words, "a bright, upright, filial, and humane one," to assume the position as successor; if a crown prince were born to Renzong, he could be dismissed again.⁶⁸⁴ To make his argument more palatable to the emperor, he referred to the example of Han Wendi choosing an heir, and promised Renzong that "the adopted heir serves the one he will succeed to, who in terms of ritual in every respect is like a father, so that he is the most revered and the most closely related [to the adopted heir]."⁶⁸⁵ Note that the last passage might be a bit too foreboding to be true and original, given that it already in no uncertain terms stakes out the claims of Sima Guang's position in the *puyi* dispute, down to using the same language of the later debate, and in that way sets Sima Guang apart from the other participants in the campaign for the succession that would become his opponents in *puyi*. Be that as it may, even if this passage was a later induction, the early memorial as a whole testifies to a credible sense of responsibility that Sima Guang felt for defending Renzong's rights and claims in the adoption and succession, given that he had been among the first and most outspoken proponents

⁶⁸² CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4410-11; p. 4412-14.

⁶⁸³ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4413.

⁶⁸⁴ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4414. While the terms used for the adopted successor and the unborn son can both be translated as crown prince, in all probability he purposefully used two different terms here, which has been represented in the translation.

⁶⁸⁵ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4413.

of it. For Sima Guang, we also have a letter to Fan Zhen talking about the ‘important matter/plan’, *da shi/ji* 大事/計, as the supporters would call it in different texts.⁶⁸⁶

These were the first steps in the public campaign for the adoption of an heir, but the question why such a campaign was necessary in the first place has remained unanswered so far. In fact, according to an explanatory passage in the *Changbian*, the ‘important matter’ had already been almost settled earlier in 5/1056 by the executive ministers around Wen Yanbo and Fu Bi, without much public ado, when Renzong had become ill, an occasion which had helped to impress the urgency of the matter to all officials. They also had identified what allegedly since early childhood had been the emperor’s candidate, the future Yingzong, and were prepared to go ahead with their proposal, when Renzong’s condition had improved, and the implementation of the plan had been halted midway.⁶⁸⁷ There is not much information about the reasons for that failure, other than a report earlier (1/1056) that, after his health had improved, the emperor left the palace shouting, accusing Empress Cao of having hatched a plan with a eunuch to commit high treason, *da ni* 大逆, a term glossed as “the crime of harming the ruler, the ancestral hall, or the palace.”⁶⁸⁸ The implicated eunuch attempted suicide, was saved, and reprimanded by Wen Yanbo that, if he had succeeded and died, this admission of guilt could have endangered the empress, and all just because of some delirious words the emperor had uttered when ill. It will be the first of several instances where the respective emperor is declared to be out of his mind at a time when this was rather opportune for some parties involved. It is impossible to get more information about the

⁶⁸⁶ QSW. vol. 56, j. 1215, p. 87.

⁶⁸⁷ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4406.

⁶⁸⁸ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4395. HYDCD. vol. 2, p. 1321.

exact background of this outburst, but whatever the reason was, it is safe to assume that a rift had occurred at this time between Emperor Renzong and Empress Cao, who, as a consequence, did not dare to appear before the emperor; in addition, we learn that in his illness, Renzong had exclusively been attended to not by the empress, but by an entourage of favorite palace ladies nicknamed the ‘Ten Pavilions’.⁶⁸⁹ Not only does this reveal a tension within the palace which would go on for the rest of Renzong’s reign, a situation which the ‘good men’ clearly were operating in, and with, for their scheme, but it also is more directly relevant for our understanding of the political alliance we see at work here: after all, this episode is connected to the ‘important plan’ harbored by Wen Yanbo and Fu Bi by the fact that both the attempt at deciding the succession and the rift between emperor and empress happened during Renzong’s illness, which is why the treason that Renzong was talking about could just as well have been the plan to have Yingzong adopted as heir when Renzong was too ill to have much of a say in the matter; much later Fu Bi and others would state openly that then Empress Cao had been working inside the palace for Yingzong’s succession;⁶⁹⁰ to be sure, there is no indication about the chronology of this endeavor, but it seems plausible that it should have been underway at this point. At the same time, the sources inform us that the chancellors had taken over government affairs at the outer court in Renzong’s absence, and had insisted that they be informed about the condition of the emperor regardless of the conventions of the inner palace.⁶⁹¹ In other words, in all probability something coming close to a coup had taken place in the inner and outer court

⁶⁸⁹ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4395.

⁶⁹⁰ In a longer memorial discussed in more detail below, shortly after the question about the ritual status of Prince Pu probably surfaced for the first time (CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4879). The opposition in the *puyi* debate would also take up that theme, to emphasize Yingzong’s debt to the empress dowager.

⁶⁹¹ CB. vol. 7, j. 182, p. 4394-95.

during the time when Renzong was incapacitated, with the aim to establish the heir that was in everybody's best interest, an interest which we will shortly describe more closely; this would be one possible explanation why Renzong would accuse, and as we shall see, humiliate the empress, and henceforth exhibit an extreme reluctance to talk about the succession.

In 7/1056, it appeared as if the word had spread that something was afoot, prompting Ouyang Xiu to make the first open move of his own, on occasion of the emperor's call for frank criticism in view of the recent flood disasters:

Wen Yanbo,⁶⁹² Fu Bi and the others jointly planning to establish a crown prince, never had been discussed in the military commission (the *xifu* was the seat of the military commission), [nevertheless] the military commissioner Wang Deyong heard about it, [and as a reaction] brought his palms together in front of his forehead, and said: 'where should we put this singularly revered Boddhisatva [figurehead?]'? Someone reported that to Ouyang Xiu, and Xiu said: 'from where did the old yamen hand get his information?' Thereupon he memorialized the emperor saying:

I humbly have observed that recently an edict was sent down, that declared that the rain and flooding has become a disaster, allowing officials within and without the capital to send up letters to talk about problems, from this one can see the determination of Your Majesty to fear heaven and love the people, and to be anxious to cultivate yourself and correct your mistakes. I concede that rain that turns into a disaster has occurred since antiquity, but there has never been a catastrophic [rain] that entered the gates of the capital, [caused] the high officials to flee, inundated the gods of soil and grain, and destroyed the city wall of the capital, this must be a large disturbance of heaven and earth. [...]⁶⁹³

Ouyang Xiu goes on to describe the severity of the situation in detail, which affected the whole country, and even the dead, whose coffins and bones were drifting around the graveyards in the suburbs. As a conclusion, he argues that

at the boundary between heaven and man, phenomena do not occur just by mistake, [in fact] there was never a calamity that would not have been summoned, and had occurred all by itself; there also has never been a disturbance where, after it appeared, there would not be a [fitting] response; the larger the disturbance is already, the deeper is the worries [that are connected to] it. In all stupidity I would argue that it is not an insignificant act of activism that would be able to put an end to this great calamitous portent, it must be equal in significance to [things such as] pondering about important [issues to do with] the ancestral hall and the gods of soil and grain, [that is, concerning the dynasty and the state], or recognizing an opportunity to decide between peace and calamity, weal and woe [of

⁶⁹² Wen Yanbo would eventually resign in 6/1058, supposedly because of a different matter (CB. vol. 8, j. 187, p. 4511).

⁶⁹³ CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4424.

the state], remedying previous mistakes, or guarding against disaster and harm that is yet to come; there are not more than one or two matters that are of this category.⁶⁹⁴

We see here another instance in which Ouyang Xiu draws on cosmological phenomena to make his case, irrespective of the fact that in all probability he personally did not necessarily believe in such direct connections between heaven and man; already early in the reign of Renzong it was instances of disaster that would move the emperor to act, and therefore Ouyang Xiu and others used these events for their purposes. According to Ouyang Xiu, decisive action was needed to respond to this situation, and in fact only one or two matters had enough gravity to remedy this situation:

From olden times the ruler must have a crown prince [as heir], so as to carry on the important task of offering sacrifices to the ancestors, this is something that one cannot be without. Your Majesty has been overseeing the government for more than thirty years now, and a crown prince has not been established, this is a ceremonial [position] that has been vacant for a long time. Recently I have heard that among officials there are many who speak up on this issue, the great ministers also have handed in suggestions to Your Majesty, but Your Majesty for a long time have not made up your mind, and mediocre ministers and stupid literati, those who know [the concept of] petty loyalty, but have no knowledge of the greater scheme of things, on account of the fact that they consider it out of the ordinary, subsequently have come up with the opinion [that to make such suggestions is] suspicious, this is a profound failure to think. [...] ⁶⁹⁵

He goes on to give more reasons why establishing an heir is a good thing, and why the detractors are not right in their criticism. The historic examples of Han Wendi and Mingzong of the Later Tang are a case in point: the former had listened to his ministers suggestions to establish an heir, and went on to become one of the founding figures of the Han, and the latter had reacted with suspicion to these suggestions, had failed to establish an heir, and subsequently caused the Later Tang Dynasty to fall into disarray.

[...] In fact I have heard that what the officials requested was merely to select an imperial clansman to become a prince, but not make him the crown prince instantly.

I humbly think that Your Majesty is sagely humane and intelligent, thoroughly observes and takes lessons from recent and ancient [history], you probably are of the opinion that this affair is an important plan for the dynasty, it ought to be done in a cautious and careful manner, and it will not do to act rashly, [therefore], the reason why you

⁶⁹⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4424-25.

⁶⁹⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4425.

are a bit tardy in the matter, is not because what the bad people say, but because you do not want to act. But the important suggestion for the dynasty has already been made known within and without [the court], it should not remain undecided for a long time. Recently, since the beginning of spring, Your Majesty has been taking medicine (that is, was ill), and the great ministers have waited upon you at your side, much like sons looking after a father, from antiquity there has not been a relationship between ruler and minister that was closer than that. This extends below to the body of ministers, scholars and commoners, women, and children, their prayers during day and night, with its noise is filling the street, and is expressed in utmost sincerity, which cannot be prohibited; from this one can see that the ministers and people are utterly loyal, the virtue that they receive from Your Majesty is generous, and their determination to love Your Majesty is profound, therefore it is becoming for Your Majesty to consider them. [...] I humbly hope that Your Majesty, of your own sagely accord, will choose someone who is virtuous from the imperial clan, and according to the ancient ritual texts, would subsequently make him a son; there is no need to establish him as a crown prince, that way one would be able to unhurriedly observe if he is virtuous or not, and also can wait for the birth of an imperial prince.⁶⁹⁶

Ouyang Xiu thus acknowledges the possibility that the emperor is unwilling to act, rather than being prevented to do so by evil influences, urges him that this cannot wait for long, and assures Renzong of the utmost sincerity of those above and below who want him to establish an heir. In addition to that, Ouyang Xiu makes use of a slight ambiguity in the meaning of *huangsi* to claim that all the ministers wanted him to do was to adopt a clansman as a prince, rather than immediately making him the crown prince, which would allow the emperor to observe him, and, more importantly, wait for the birth of a son of his own. As we shall see, this is not a trivial detail, and would have all sorts of consequences later on. Ouyang Xiu also mentions a second important decision with the potential to end the floods, namely the case of Di Qing, a successful military commander who had been made military commissioner, a rank that in Ouyang Xiu's opinion was too eminent for a military man to hold, for Di Qing's own good. This also would be a trivial detail, if Sima Guang had not seconded this motion, together with the demand to establish an heir in a later memorial, showing that their political commonalities were not just limited to one issue. Much like in the old days, Ouyang Xiu goes on to ask the emperor to draw on this and his earlier memorials on the matter of Di Qing to start a court discussion about this question; note that in the last passage he also makes a claim to the 'utmost sincerity' of the people of the realm. As if

⁶⁹⁶ CB. vol. 8, j.183, p. 4426.

wanting to dispel all doubts about what he is invoking here, he goes on to quote the ‘Treatise of the five phases’ and the connection that it makes between issues of the ‘ancestral hall’ and flood disasters, although not without acknowledging his own ignorance in such matters.⁶⁹⁷

A month later, after two more memorials by Wu Kui and Lü Jingchu,⁶⁹⁸ on the occasion of an eclipse Sima Guang would offer his own argument in the matter of establishing an heir. In it, Sima Guang noticeably disagreed with the reasoning that Ouyang Xiu and Sima’s friend Fan Zhen had offered for establishing an heir, all but denying the significance of the disasters, which however starts with what sounds like a reference to ‘On Fundamentals’:

In all humility I am of the opinion that of the matters concerning the state and dynasty, there are policies that are more or less important, and there are matters that are more or less urgent, if one knows the proper sequence [in which policies and matters need to be done,] then there is nothing that cannot be achieved. There are discussants who may say that the important and pressing tasks of the current time lie in [the current] flood and inundation. This is really not true. Those who are harmed by that flood are merely the outcast and river dwelling people; if it rains for a long time it will stop eventually, and then one dredges [the waterways] a little and fills in the gaps [in the dikes], and then the people all return to their trade, how can that become a concern for the dynasty? That being so, [some say the pressing matters of the time] consist of the dwindling and lacking [supplies of] grain and silk, [that is, the financial crisis]. This is also not true. As to the riches of the whole realm, when cultivating them in the right fashion, making use of them in an economic way, and causing good officials to administer them, then [financial means such as] grains and silks cannot be exhausted, how can this then become a concern for the dynasty? That being so, [some say the pressing matters of the time] lie in the strong enemies who invade to steal. That is also not true. As to strong enemies who are invading to steal, all they can do is to merely disturb the people of the borderlands, if resistance to them is [organized] in the proper fashion, and preparations against them are well planned, one can force them to pay tribute one after another, how can that turn into a concern for the state?

According to my stupid [opinion], at present what is most important and pressing concerns the fact that the foundation [of the dynastic succession] has not been laid, and that [therefore] the hearts of the people [*zhong*] are in fear and doubt, to consider this as not being of any concern, and to focus on those other three things instead, amounts to giving up the central organs so as to rescue the four limbs, is that not a mistake? Let’s suppose there are ministers of great talent, who were able to restore the ways of the nine rivers, store up food for nine years, and reclaim a border area of 1000 *li*, but if the foundation has not been laid, then what good would that do? In that case, the restoration would be as insignificant as these three things! Although Your Majesty’s health has been restored recently, the people of the four directions have no way of generally knowing that, and still there are some who are doubtful and in fear, if you do not draw on this opportunity to quickly choose a virtuous [member] of the imperial

⁶⁹⁷ CB. vol. 8, j.183, p. 4426-27. Du Yan also would support the idea in a memorial, possibly dated to that year, for technically *zhihe* 3 would be 1056, but that already was *jiayou* 1 (QSW. vol. 15, j. 318, p. 368).

⁶⁹⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4427-4428. The latter already makes the suggestion of following the precedent of the two *zong* of the dynasty, Taizong and Zhenzong, to be put in charge of the capital as a sign short of actually publicly announcing a successor, a suggestion that was taken up by Sima Guang.

clan, and have him temporarily occupy the position of crown prince, within the palace it would serve to assist in guarding the emperor's health, without it would serve to calm down and put at ease the common people, in case there is an unforeseen thing happening [that is, Your Majesty's death], there is nothing else but this to make preparations for it!

To my mind, Your Majesty is sharp and perspicacious about [things concerning] safety and danger, the policy responding to this issue has already been decided, but one still is keeping it secret, not yet wanting to proclaim it to the outside [world], if that indeed is the case, I still fear that this won't do. Why is that so? Today the people in the realm, are standing on the tips of their toes, pricking their ears to hear, in order to wait for the enlightened edict to be handed down, only after that has happened, all the people would be at ease by themselves, what is there still to wait and keep secret? If it is the case that the crown prince is considered too great a matter, and not to be hurriedly decided, then either having him assist in government, ritually giving him a residence and a guard, or putting him in charge of the capital, also would be sufficient to put a stop to the source of misfortune and hardship, and appease the minds of those within and without the palace. Today what the court discusses day and night, generally speaking all are obvious and ordinary matters, they are not things that are really important and urgent. I fear that if I remain seated with my hands in my lap and retain my composure, this will amount to [abetting] the growth of this concern for the dynasty, to a point where dealing with it, even when exerting oneself will be difficult. This is why I cannot sleep at ease, and am unable to eat much, do not avoid the punishment of death, and relentlessly offer advice.⁶⁹⁹

In short, Sima Guang here rejects the reasoning offered by Ouyang Xiu, who tied the political issue of not having established an heir to the cosmological phenomena of the time, that is, the floods that plagued the state. Instead, it is the heart of the people that needs to be put at ease first, a task that is more urgent than even the most pressing practical problems of the day, concerning said floods, the financial situation, and the military preparation against the northern enemies, which are best addressed by good administration. This is quite remarkable for someone who would later put much more emphasis on these seemingly trivial issues, when he attacked the New Policies regime for its mishandling of the financial policies. Here, he rejects the cosmological alarmism in the earlier arguments, and instead focuses on what one might even term public opinion, or at least public sentiment about this important issue to make his case. Both Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang talk about sincerity in their argument, but whereas for Ouyang this is merely meant to show that the suggestion made by all and sundry to establish an heir was offered in good faith and with sincere intentions, the call to bring inner and outer state into

⁶⁹⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4430-31. Compare with a memorial about an eclipse, where Sima Guang argues against officials congratulating the emperor on the fact that an eclipse was not reaching the predicted degree, stating that it had to be visible somewhere, and thus still was a warning (CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4672-73).

congruence, that is, a form of sincerity, takes a much more central role Sima Guang's argument: it is the fear and insecurity that have taken hold of the hearts of the people that should prompt the emperor to act, for this was the issue that would make or break the dynasty, not the trivial details of the other peripheral problems. Decisive action was necessary to avoid the perils that this internal insecurity of the people would cause. At least in this memorial Sima Guang also exhibits more common ground with Wang Anshi on the question of financial administration – while insisting that resources be used in an economical fashion as well, he also speaks of 'cultivating' the riches of the world, as well as having the right people to administer them. Sima Guang claims that in this way, the riches of the realm could not be exhausted, a contention that is more or less the position that Wang Anshi took in the *Wan yan shu* a little later, if with a slightly stronger emphasis on the 'cultivation' part.⁷⁰⁰

After some subsequent promotions of 'good men' and others in 8/1056,⁷⁰¹ and the appointment as examiner, Ouyang Xiu in 1057 on the occasion of a princess's wedding repeats their earlier request, although this time using a different approach, appealing to the advantages for the emperor's 'human sentiments', *renqing*, if he had an adoptive son to look after him now that his daughter had left the palace. After the usual assertions that he was nothing but sincere, and the reminder that there had been no reply to his earlier memorial, Ouyang Xiu tries to enumerate the real advantages to Renzong's private life if he had an adoptive son to look after him, thereby ending his lonely existence within the palace. To achieve that it, again, was not necessary to

⁷⁰⁰ We also have another memorial by Pang Ji dated vaguely to 1056 that also asks to establish a crown prince (QSW. vol. 17, j. 366, p. 420).

⁷⁰¹ Han Qi to the military commission, Zhang Fangping to the financial commission (CB. vol. 8, j. 183, p. 4435).

appoint the candidate as crown prince, merely making him a prince was sufficient, thereby giving the emperor the time to test his character and wait for a son of his own to be born.⁷⁰²

Bao Zheng, upon his appointment as censor in 6/1058, is said to have brought up the topic in person before the emperor, who asked him whom he would suggest as heir. As would become the standard reply to these questions, Bao Zheng claimed that he only was thinking about having an heir as such, and asking him for a name amounted to suspecting foul play, after all, only the emperor himself could choose the best-fitting candidate. However, he did get an almost positive reply from the emperor, who agreed that one should discuss that without any hurry.⁷⁰³ A longer hiatus in the campaign can be explained by two pregnancies in the palace; going by a slightly later account, the emperor wanted to wait with any decision until these came to term. In both cases, however, a daughter was born rather than the desired son.⁷⁰⁴

It is unlikely that all of the officials who suggested an adoption were talking to each other,⁷⁰⁵ or politically connected in some way,⁷⁰⁶ after all, it was a perfectly reasonable request to establish an heir and avoid the infighting that had accompanied unsettled successions in the past. Much like with what we have seen with the good men in the 1030s and 1040s, different officials took up the good cause, and at times seemed to be at odds with each other over other issues, such as

⁷⁰² CB. vol. 8, j. 186, p. 4489-90. Wu Ji had a similar suggestion in 2/1058: CB. vol. 8, j. 187, p. 4502-03.

⁷⁰³ CB. vol. 8, j. 187, p. 4513.

⁷⁰⁴ (5/1059) CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4565-66. On that occasion the ranks of all the 'Ten Pavilions' are increased, Fan Shidao writes against that (CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4567-68). At one point, the emperor gives that as a reason to wait (CB. vol. 8, j. 196, p. 4728).

⁷⁰⁵ E.g. Wang Tao, who at the same time complained that the chancellors decided all things, and demanded to establish an heir (CB. vol. 8, j. 191, p. 4612-13).

⁷⁰⁶ Song Qi supposedly also makes such a suggestion, as is recorded on the occasion of his death in 5/1061 (CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4668-69).

Bao Zheng and Ouyang Xiu. However, there are clear signs that at the core this was an orchestrated attempt by a definable association of literati, and that it was a conscious, political decision to take part or not. Firstly, when Fu Bi and Han Qi had the first of a series of falling outs, purportedly in 6/1061, several years before the final break during Yingzong's reign, Fu Bi also changed his mind on the adoption question, and suddenly argued that these important things take their time, and that it would not do to force a decision; in his opinion, those officials who tried to persuade the emperor probably did so for selfish reasons.⁷⁰⁷ Cai Xiang, the old *qingli* ally, allegedly had a different opinion as well, and therefore left the court under Yingzong;⁷⁰⁸ most famously, the sources tell us that Wang Anshi also did not agree with Han Qi's suggestion to establish Yingzong as Prince, and as a consequence did not dare to come to court during the next reign.⁷⁰⁹

At the same time, these instances of dissenters therefore also highlight a motive for officials to support the scheme, since relationships of a mentor-student kind established with a crown prince or young emperor, as well as support in the succession, ordinarily would translate into positions, access, and influence for these officials later on. As we have seen, Sima Guang in the previous chapter assumed that Renzong's undue partiality towards Xia Song had its origin in the days when Renzong was crown prince. To give another concrete example, in 1038, when everybody

⁷⁰⁷ (6/1061) CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4674-75. Zhang Shu, on the other hand, asks for establishing an heir (p. 4675-77).

⁷⁰⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 204, p. 4946-47. Cai Xiang is defended by Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu at this point.

⁷⁰⁹ *Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 24; j. 9, p. 95. The latter passage describes Wang being questioned about that by Shenzong, and defending himself. It is also interesting to see how even much later the question of who was against the succession was of interest – there is an anecdote about Empress Cao on her deathbed handing over a box with memorials against the succession, with the stipulation that Shenzong not act against the memorialists – it is possible that this also alludes to Wang Anshi (p. 23).

lamented the bad choice of chancellors, Renzong explicitly cited Zhang Dexiang's loyal conduct during the regency as the reason why he was elevated to the chancellery.⁷¹⁰ In other words, close contact, merits accrued during the succession or regency, as well as an earlier student-teacher relationship were important assets for officials, and accordingly also for the 'good men', especially given the argument made above that the single-most important factor that determined the negative outcome of the *qingli* reforms was the failure to persuade, and get permanent access to Renzong.⁷¹¹ The 'good men' had never been part of that circle of confidants and teachers for Renzong,⁷¹² and this plan would give them the access and opportunity to persuade the new emperor of their ideas. How important participation in this endeavor was also is shown by the fact that Fan Zhen's role in Yingzong's succession was the first that Fan Chunren mentioned in his eulogy-letter for Fan,⁷¹³ and that Han Wei as late as *Yuanyou* (1086) would try to persuade the court to reward Fan Zhen for his merits in this matter, and lament that other participants had already received such rewards.⁷¹⁴ We thus also see two more participants in *puyi* come out in favor of the adoption campaign and one of the campaigners, although this would probably be due to *puyi*, not because they were part of the present campaign.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹⁰ CB. vol. 5, j. 121, p. 2866. The other chancellor, Zhang Shixun, supposedly also had contacts from that time.

⁷¹¹ Ji Xiao-bin notes that Sima Guang, by assisting in the succession, had become a 'state elder who enthroned the emperor', and considers that one of the basis for Sima Guang's special relationship with the imperial house (Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. p. 72, 206n42; drawing on an observation by Bol).

⁷¹² A fact that is attested to by the tables provided by Lamouroux, for very few of the compilers of history and tutors he lists there were from the inner circle of good men (Yu Jing, Fan Zhongyan), although some had connections to them (such as Yan Shu). Lamouroux, "Song Renzong's Court Landscape." p. 90-93.

⁷¹³ QSW. vol. 72, j. 1561, p. 30.

⁷¹⁴ QSW. vol. 49, j. 1067, p. 194.

⁷¹⁵ Both officials were very young at the time, and no memorial could be located that would directly make the demand to establish an heir.

Finally, especially when success was imminent in 8/1061, the sources inform us quite openly that Sima Guang, after once again pleading with the emperor went to the *Zhongshu* and gave Han Qi a hint as to what he had discussed, using a similar phrase that at been used several times in memorials, “important plan for the dynasty and the state.”⁷¹⁶ On the next occasion, and after another memorial, it is reported that Sima Guang had been prompted by Han Qi through a middleman to bring up the issue again, and consent to having it officially delegated to the chancellery this time, specifically citing the fact that the request should not come from his side.⁷¹⁷ Earlier, the emperor once again had asked the petitioner, Sima Guang, if he wanted to go forward and suggest a name, but both Sima Guang and Lü Hui in his memorial, as well as Han Qi at the decisive meeting a bit later, insisted that it had to remain the decision of the emperor whom to select as heir. The point is of course that the heir should receive as much legitimacy as possible; any hint that the future emperor was actually the choice of the entourage would diminish the adopted son’s claim to the throne, and cast doubt on the officials involved.⁷¹⁸

In 10/1061, the emperor finally acceded to the request, and talked about two possible candidates who had been raised in the palace. Of the two, only Zongshi, the future Yingzong, seemed to him to have the abilities to be emperor, since the other one was not smart, and after pondering it for another night, the order was given that he be promoted to, among other positions, head of the

⁷¹⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4719. There is a bit of confusion here, because the emperor orders Sima Guang to go to the *Zhongshu* and submit what he had said, but Sima declines, and asks the emperor himself to inform them of his intentions. Then he goes anyway, purportedly to discuss a different matter, and informs them unofficially.

⁷¹⁷ (9/1061) CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4722-23. Sima Guang here was seconded by Lü Hui in a memorial (p. 4723-24).

⁷¹⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4719, 4723. Sima Guang here actually explains the motive by pointing to negative examples of heirs decided on by high ministers.

‘court of the imperial clan’, a move that was modest, allegedly because of the fact that Zongshi was still in mourning for his father, but still signaled the imminent adoption and elevation of the candidate in question.⁷¹⁹ We never learn who the second candidate was. Then and later, the sources insist that the decision was made by the emperor himself, and not in any way influenced by the executive ministers, however, this could not prevent rumors to that effect from spreading.⁷²⁰ Given that problem, it also becomes clear why someone like Sima Guang, who previously had not been too overt an associate of the *qingli* good men, and apparently for whatever reason had kept his distance from Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi in terms of social ritual, in fact was an ideal associate to assist them in the matter. We should once again remind ourselves that Renzong reacted strongly against any sign of factionalism, and would all the more so after the episode mentioned above that we have interpreted as a quasi-coup, and concerning a topic that was of vital interest to him. It would be imperative for the associates to dispel or at least minimize the notion that an organized faction was behind all of this. However, while we have seen here in the previous chapter that Sima Guang in terms of ideology and core goals was not too far removed from the *qingli* ideas, the lack of more public social ritual between him and the *qingli* ‘good men’ is still significant given what we have said earlier about the connecting potential that such ritual had had – in other words, the subsequent lack in cohesiveness between him and Han Qi and Fan Zhongyan could be explained by that. It should be reiterated, however,

⁷¹⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4727-28.

⁷²⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4772-73. Wang Gui, who was ordered to draft the edict, speaks to the emperor about ‘outside talk’ to that effect.

that Ouyang Xiu would openly recommend and laud Sima Guang for his participation in this campaign at a later point, after *puyi*.⁷²¹

The continuous assertion that the officials did not think of a specific candidate notwithstanding, we have seen that apparently there was only one candidate that fit the bill, Zongshi, who in fact had been raised and educated in the palace at an earlier time, and supposedly been treated as a son by Empress Cao and Emperor Renzong. He only left the inner quarters when a prince was born, or, according to another report, when the emperor doted on Lady Zhang.⁷²² It so happened that during this stay at the palace, a niece of Empress Dowager Cao, Lady Gao (1032–1093),⁷²³ was also present, and subsequently went on to marry him and become his empress. Back in the residence of Prince Pu, they had a son, the future Shenzong, in 1048. In other words, when this clan member was adopted, the officials supporting this decision would ensure the gratitude of and their access to the next emperor and the one after that, who at that time already was in his teens and less likely to die; they would be in a position to influence and educate them both. To name an example, Lü Gongzhu would become ‘tutor of the classics mat’ for the new emperor, the same Lü Gongzhu who conveniently upon Prince Pu’s death had written a memorial to admonish Renzong to refrain from taking part in the lantern festival given that his uncle was lying in state,⁷²⁴ showing both that Renzong was not that close to the prince, and that Lü

⁷²¹ QSW. vol. 32, j. 690, p. 303.

⁷²² CB. vol. 5, j. 123, p. 2909. The comment doubts that other reports are true that a newborn son was the reason, because the son was born two months later; a pregnancy may have been sufficient, though. *Wenjian lu* reports that it happened because the emperor favored Lady Zhang. *Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 20.

⁷²³ 高氏/皇后, posthumously also known as Xuanren Shenglie Empress 宣仁聖烈皇后.

⁷²⁴ QSW. vol. 50, j. 1092, p. 263. Record of tutoring: CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4839; j. 201, p. 4863-64.

Gongzhu in all probability must in some way have been aware of the effort to have Prince Pu's son adopted. Han Wei, among others, became tutor of the future Shenzong, and accomplished two things in this position: firstly we shall see that as crown prince and eventually as emperor he would take clear sides in the subsequent disputes in the inner palace, against his father, Yingzong, and for the empress dowager;⁷²⁵ secondly the sources report that each time Han Wei explained something to the prince, he would tell the future supporter of Wang Anshi that this idea had been Wang Anshi's, and not his own, and thus plant the seed for Wang Anshi's reform regime.⁷²⁶ My point is that this 'important plan' had far-reaching consequences, and not just in theory.

But aside from that, the adoption had also profound implications for Empress Cao and the wider Cao-Gao clan, because it ensured its influence and position over the foreseeable future, for at least two generations of emperors; Yingzong would be the adopted son of Empress Cao, and the husband of Empress Gao, while the presumptive successor, Shenzong, would be the son and adopted grandson to both. We have already seen in Part I how important the aspect of motherhood was for empresses, so important that Dowager Liu appropriated that status for herself from another court lady. In this case, there was no need to resort to such means, because the motherhood of both the adopted mother of Yingzong, Empress Cao, and the natural mother

⁷²⁵ For the promotions of Han Wei, see: CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4827; j. 202, p. 4892-93. On the latter occasion there is a report that Han Wei reprimanded his charge and urged him to show his best behavior towards the dowager, and that subsequently the dowager expressed her satisfaction at how courteous the future Shenzong was towards her. That tutoring the prince is very important to Sima Guang is shown by the fact that very early in Yingzong's reign (5/1063) he asked for more access and a greater influence for the tutors of the future Shenzong, to keep evil influence from him, so that over time "good people would become increasingly close [to him], and bad people increasingly distant." The idea was that there was always a 'good man' in his presence to guide him (CB. vol. 8, j. 4807-08).

⁷²⁶ *Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 24-25. This anecdote has found its way into Wang's *Song shi* biography (SS. vol. 30, j. 327, p. 10543).

of Shenzong, Empress Gao appeared unquestionable, and in fact in this way a kind of female succession was achieved that Dowager Liu still had failed to bring about. At the time that is not mentioned, of course, but later memorials, among others by Fu Bi, in fact try to point out that it was Empress Cao who engineered his succession within the palace, in order to make sure that Yingzong is fully aware of the debt he has to her.⁷²⁷ Ex-post hagiography has it that it was Renzong's wish for Yingzong and Empress Gao to marry and strengthen the bond between the families.⁷²⁸ However, given the obvious implications for Yingzong's and the empress' legitimacy, this report is somewhat questionable, at the very least in terms of its chronology; in fact, apart from the incident mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, there is more reason to believe that the relationship between Empress Cao and Renzong had turned for the worse, at the very least since the latter had started to dote on Lady Zhang. While there is no additional direct evidence for discord between the two sovereigns, we do have a number of separate instances in which the ritual status of Empress Cao was infringed on in some way or other. For once, on Lady Zhang's death, Renzong elevated her to *Wencheng* Empress, and then and later ritually attempted to treat her like an empress, which elicited a critical response by officials who feared that that infringed both on the rights of his empress mothers and the current empress.⁷²⁹ In 1058 and 1059, respectively, Renzong tried to increase the ritual status of Empress Guo, whom he had deposed early in his reign under the protest of Fan Zhongyan, and who had died a little later; in 6/1059 there was a plan to give a higher rank to the 'Ten Pavilions' on occasion of the birth of princesses to two of them; all of these plans were rebutted by Ouyang Xiu, as well as Fan Shidao

⁷²⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4879.

⁷²⁸ *Wenjian lu*. j. 3, p. 20. CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4804.

⁷²⁹ Liu Chang (1/1054): QSW. vol. 59, j. 1280, p. 93-94. Han Wei (1060): QSW. vol. 49, j. 1061, p. 114-115.

and Liu Chang, respectively.⁷³⁰ Finally, Sima Guang in two memorials defended the empress' status against two attempts to ritually treat palace ladies the same way as her, one of which we have discussed in the previous chapter; these attempts took place after the elevation of the prince.⁷³¹ In each case, there was of course a perfectly reasonable argument to make for keeping the ritual hierarchy of the dynasty intact and defending it against an emperor who treated this ritual order as his personal fiefdom, however, together with the adoption episode it becomes rather significant that officials would defend her who would also be assisting the empress to bring about a decision on the adoption that clearly worked in her favor. It might come as a surprise, but the *cui bono* question and more or less circumstantial evidence suggest that some of the most revered literati, Sima Guang, Han Qi, Ouyang Xiu, and others, indeed not only had collaborated with each other, but also had in some way managed to cooperate with the empress dowager to get the official approval of Renzong for their candidate for the succession, against his own intentions. One could argue that from their point of view, this happened for the good of the state, given that the emperor seemed unwilling to do what was necessary, but the fact still should change our perspective on the role of the empress dowager in 11th-century politics, and specifically her relationship to officials such as Sima Guang.⁷³²

⁷³⁰ Ouyang Xiu on erecting a hall to enshrine and worship Empress Guo: CB. vol. 8, j. 188, p. 4532 (10/1058). Fan Shidao against elevating the 'Ten Pavilions' without consulting the proper offices: CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4567-68. More suggestions about enshrining Empress Guo, now in the Hall for Empresses; Liu Chang refutes that idea: CB. vol. 8, j. 190, p. 4581-83. Discussion between Zhang Dong and Liu Chang on that topic: p. 4584-4586.

⁷³¹ (1062) CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4779-80; p. 4781-82. The latter one is marked as 'Sima Guang et al.'

⁷³² This political background also casts a new light on the topic of an article by Peter Lorge, "Sima Guang on Song Taizong", which discusses how Sima Guang recounts and frames the unusual succession of Song Taizong to his brother, and the claim that Taizu's and Taizong's mother had had a hand in the matter, wanting to avoid the struggles and dangers that a child emperor, or an unclear succession bring with them. She in turn persuades Taizu, whose intention in this account then is considered a given; moreover, a letter to that effect conveniently appears and brings the official Zhao Pu back to court, and back into Taizong's fold. Lorge interprets the allusion to the Shujing that the story contains as potentially ironic and sarcastic, highlighting the problems with the legitimacy of this succession (Peter Lorge, "Sima Guang on Song Taizong: Politics, History and Historiography." *Journal of Song*

It is unclear why Renzong could not have adopted a different member of his clan, and what made him choose the ‘right’ one in the end, other than the fact that Yingzong had been raised in the palace; in fact, Yingzong’s father, the Prince of Pu, had already served as a temporary heir to Zhenzong, before Renzong’s birth.⁷³³ Be that as it may, in view of the circumstances it seems safe to conclude that Renzong originally had no intention to adopt Yingzong, and was swayed by the relentless public, and probably some less public pressure to provide the candidate of the empress and the officials with his personal blessing, while probably still hoping that he would have his own son, and get the opportunity to unmake the arrangement. The reasons for his reluctance may have been partly lying in the general unwillingness of early Song emperors to name an heir, as Ji Xiao-bin describes,⁷³⁴ but the power struggle inside the palace, and the fear that the empress dowager would be able to prevent the succession of a biological son yet to be born provide a more immediate explanation for it. From the record of their public interactions it is not entirely clear why, and how the officials were able to corner the emperor and cajole him into doing that, given their difficulties at implementing political change, or in fact getting clear

Yuan Studies 42 (2012). p. 5-43. p. 34); he presents it as a purely historiographical problem, because it leaves Sima Guang caught between the need to accurately record problematic history and at the same time preserve the legitimacy of the dynastic succession of ‘his’ dynasty (p. 42-43). However, from the perspective of his own involvement in the attempt by officials and the empress to cajole Renzong into announcing his intention against his will, legitimize the candidate, and prevent a succession crisis in the process, this becomes more than just a historiographical problem; it makes it unlikely that irony or sarcasm is at play here in a historic account that must have been very important for Sima Guang personally, and on many different levels, given how invested he was in the legitimacy of the dynasty. Instead, the ambiguity and double entendre that Lorge detects in Sima Guang’s narrative of Taizong’s problematic succession to me seems to hint at the very immediate moral problem that Sima Guang’s own participation in a similar endeavor posed to him; the allusion to the Shujing story and the Duke of Zhou then could even refer to Sima Guang himself as well, whose loyalty and service to the dynasty would have to await recognition at a later time.

⁷³³ *Wenjian houlu*. j. 1, p. 5.

⁷³⁴ Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. p. 64-67. Lorge also points out that already the founder, Song Taizu, had been reluctant to decide the question of succession during his lifetime. Lorge, “Sima Guang on Song Taizong.” p. 12, 16.

decisions from Renzong on other matters. However, it does seem that a considerable number of them put all their efforts into it, especially given that the suggestions appeared to come from diverse sides, and not just from the old *qingli* guard. The fact that he named the name would prove extremely important for the legitimacy of the future heir, but would also be a burden, because it appeared in almost every memorial that admonished Yingzong to keep on honoring his adopted father.

All could have been well now, but for the fact that Renzong was not the only reluctant party in the process, as it would turn out: the clansman was named, the order to promote him issued in 10/1061, but the candidate firmly declined to accept the appointment, and a little later asked to be allowed to finish his mourning for his father. After four memorials he was allowed to do so.⁷³⁵ At this point, when the emperor asked about this, Han Qi could still with some credibility congratulate the emperor on his selection of a virtuous and far-sighted candidate, given what we have said about the literati culture of ritual deferral earlier.⁷³⁶ However, almost a year later, in 7/1062, several months after the end of the mourning period, Zongshi still asked to resign from his appointments.⁷³⁷ To finally prevent him from taking recourse in administrative deferral procedures, on the suggestion of Han Qi he was in a personal rescript and edict declared a son of Renzong, but not until Wang Gui, the drafter of the edict, had in an audience been assured by the emperor himself that it was his own wish, and not that of the executive ministers.⁷³⁸ Shortly later,

⁷³⁵ Elevation and first deferral: CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4727-28; request to remain in mourning: p. 4729.

⁷³⁶ Taizong's example on occasion of his succession would also suggest that deferrals, or at least modest reluctance, were customary under these circumstances (Lorge, "Sima Guang on Song Taizong." p. 15-16).

⁷³⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4769.

⁷³⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4772-73.

one changed Zongshi's name to Shu, and ordered him to enter the palace and move to his residence, while sending back the numerous memorials he wrote to decline the elevation, but the prince still did not come, claiming that he was ill.⁷³⁹ This prompted yet another memorial from Sima Guang and Wang Tao, praising the emperor for his farsightedness to “get the right person for the realm,” given that he had declined the promotion for more than 300 days now, in a culture where people vied with each other for the smallest benefit. However, they also admonished the emperor to make sure that there was no more delay or deferral, by dismissing the eunuchs so far charged with the task of conferring the order, and by admonishing the prince that the orders of the ruler and father were to be followed swiftly. Han Qi seconded that, and suggested to send someone else to convey the order. But that also was to no avail at first, as were the threats of the high-ranking messengers, and Zongshi/Shu only acquiesced to entering the palace when his secretary pointed out to him that he would not be safe even if the emperor should accede to his request to defer the succession, given the fact that his name had been publicly announced, and therefore constituted a threat to any future successors to the throne. Within the logic of deferrals, the prince's actions so far make a lot of sense, since they forced the emperor to confer a higher rank on him, but this conversation also provided a hint to a different possible motive of Zongshi's obstinacy, for he supposedly he said “I do not dare to seek fortune, so as to avoid misfortune.”⁷⁴⁰

In the absence of any writings on that from the future emperor it is again hard to say something about the reasons for his reluctance, but this and other passages provide more than just

⁷³⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4773, 4776.

⁷⁴⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4777.

circumstantial clues: firstly, he had been raised in the palace before as a child, and then was sent away without much ado when the birth of a son seemed imminent, or after a change of heart of the emperor;⁷⁴¹ in fact, one of the arguments that the campaigners brought forth in his favor was that this could be done again should a son be born. Accordingly, it is imperative to understand that he had only been declared a son at this point, and while he was promoted to certain administrative positions that also served to signal the intention, he was *not* given the title of crown prince, precisely so that in case another imperial prince was born he could be deposed as smoothly as possible, and would not pose a threat to the future crown prince. Secondly, during the campaign for his adoption, his eldest brother had been accused of misdeeds in connection to the funeral for their father, had subsequently been exiled, and allegedly died of being indignant about the injustice.⁷⁴² This passage, and a much later memorial enumerating the misdeeds of a eunuch claim that said eunuch, Ren Shouzhong, was actually culpable, and had framed the eldest son for a lapse in filial piety, according to the latter source Shouzhong also wanted to prevent the adoption and thereby ensure the succession of a minor that he could control instead.⁷⁴³ The point here is not that we need to believe every little detail of this account, but that the general gist is worth to be taken seriously, namely that Zhao Zongshi had already had a taste of court maneuvering, and was well aware that he was but a pawn in the stratagems of other people, not the least that of the empress. Indeed, Wang Tao, in an earlier memorial talking about the issue of Zongshi's excessive deferrals of the clan-office post, hinted at the fact that there were rumors

⁷⁴¹ Christian Meyer makes the point that this back and forth instigated Yingzong's resistance to the succession. Meyer, *Ritendikussionen*. p. 255.

⁷⁴² CB. vol. 8, j. 193, p. 4662.

⁷⁴³ This, and the information about the brother's death is from the memorial by Sima Guang that enumerated Ren Shouzhong's crimes at his dismissal in 8/1064 (CB. vol. 8, j. 202, p. 4899).

about an involvement of palace women and eunuchs, and that this was making the new candidate apprehensive and prevented him from coming forth.⁷⁴⁴ My point is, firstly, that there are in fact very rational reasons imaginable that prevented the prince from accepting the succession happily, which in view of the ‘insanity’ that would strike Yingzong later is important to keep in mind. Secondly, the future Yingzong quite literally had to be threatened with the dire consequences of his continued deferral to finally accept the role as an heir.

When Zongshi did come to court in 8/1062, “[...] the different ranks of his entourage did not quite number 30 people, the baggage was all but empty; not unlike a poor literatus, he only had several cabinets of books and nothing else. Everywhere they congratulated themselves when they heard that.”⁷⁴⁵ Quite tellingly, the last remark originally comes from Ouyang Xiu’s diary, and in many ways the image that he invokes of the poor scholar entering the palace to assume his position goes well with the argument that we have tried to make here, namely that the literati ‘good men’ had orchestrated this succession, not just to have access and influence over future administrations, but also to make sure that the emperor for once would himself embody literati virtues. What greater boost for the values of the ‘good men’ and their reputation can be imagined than painting the future emperor as such, and promoting and disseminating their values in this way? Choose the right person, and the rest will follow, esteem the right people, and everything will turn for the better. Again, however, we encounter the fundamental problem that the ‘good men’ had failed so far to find an answer for: how does one know who the right person is,

⁷⁴⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4769-71. This led to the idea of making Zongshi a prince by imperial order.

⁷⁴⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4777.

especially in a fragmented political world in which the choice might be limited by the circumstances?

When Renzong died on the last day of 3/1063, Yingzong's apparent reluctance to ascend the throne continued: according to one account, Empress Cao first kept the death a secret until next morning, then had the closest ministers come in to settle matters, and summoned the prince. When the empress declared him the successor, he protested and tried to leave, but the officials together manhandled him to untie his hair and deck him out in the imperial robe, once again quite literally forcing him to take up the new position. Later, Yingzong expressed his wish to withdraw in mourning for a full three years, instead of the customary shortened mourning period for ruling emperors, ordering Han Qi to become the chancellor in chief. This would have effectively installed a regency, but the request was denied by the executive officials. According to a more detailed account, the empress had first met the ministers, and asked their opinion on the succession, to dispel all suspicion that she had had a hand in it.⁷⁴⁶ I cannot see much practical reason for the circumspection of the empress and Han Qi, given that Yingzong, as the chosen son, had the best claim at that point, except for maybe a vague fear that someone else, such as said eunuch Ren Shouzhong, would try to play a trick. Yet, what this maneuver certainly accomplished was to publicly establish the empress and Han Qi as those who had safeguarded Yingzong's accession, increasing the debt to them. Certainly in the case of the empress, memorialists in the debate yet to come would point to her role in ensuring Yingzong's succession, to illustrate what he owed her. In fact, with her prudent actions, Empress Cao to a

⁷⁴⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4792-93. The compiler discusses the different versions of the story in his comment.

certain degree established herself as the decisive, activist ruler that the officials always had wanted Renzong to be.

Alas, after three days during which the new emperor had responded and decided things in a normal fashion, he, as the sources say, “became ill, he did not recognize people, and his speech was incoherent,” and henceforth was unable to take part in audiences, or, more importantly, in the *dalian* 大斂 mourning procedures for his adopted father, where he started to howl and wander about.⁷⁴⁷ However, quite conveniently the empress, now dowager, was at hand for the executive officials to request her to take over the regency “together with the emperor,” and while originally it was supposed to be exercised at the side of the emperor, a system evolved in which the officials first “reported to” and inquired after the emperor’s health in one room, and then proceeded to repeat their reports, and presumably get a decision from the empress dowager in another one.⁷⁴⁸ While some improvement occurred towards the end of the month that enabled the emperor to carry out the *daxiang* ritual for Renzong, this turned out to be short lived,⁷⁴⁹ and allegedly some more embarrassing episodes ensued that showed that the emperor was unfit for duty.⁷⁵⁰

Whatever the psychological background of Yingzong’s illness, that is, whether it was indeed what one would call a mental illness today, or whether it was called that way because an emperor

⁷⁴⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4795.

⁷⁴⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4795-96, 4797.

⁷⁴⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4804. Return to or reiteration of the divided reporting: CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4809.

⁷⁵⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4812. We are told that Han Qi had his robe soiled by Yingzong when he tried to give him medicine; the empress dowager quickly presented him with a new one.

not wanting to be one was unthinkable, it seems likely that the condition was in some way or other connected to his reluctance to rule, and the quite reasonable fear to be used as pawn by the different people who had ensured his succession.⁷⁵¹ Given the intention to carry out an extended mourning that he expressed when still *compos mentis* in the first days of his rule,⁷⁵² it seems not to be overstating anything to call this behavior a quite conscious ‘refusal to work’ of sorts on the part of Yingzong. However, it would be taking this too far were one to assume that this all was the original intent of the associates of the ‘important plan’, in fact, it is more likely that it caught them by surprise as well, and forced them, and especially Empress Dowager Cao, to take a more public role at court than they had intended. Nevertheless, Dowager Cao, Han Qi, and Sima Guang took it in their stride, and arguably gained power and position in the process: Han Qi more and more assumed the role as chief minister, Dowager Cao ruled from behind the screen, and Sima Guang, as academician and censor, became a publicist of sorts for the new regime, handing in frequent memorials with the clear goal of making the transition as smooth as possible, and providing ritual and political guidance in these times.⁷⁵³ He also publicly argued for a careful selection of the prince’s tutors and entourage, and lamented that the new officials for the post, among them Wang Tao, did not get to spend enough time with their charge, leaving the way

⁷⁵¹ At some point the *Changbian* all but says that: “when the emperor first became ill with fear and suspicions”. CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4815. Christian Meyer again pointed to a connection between being sent away earlier and his later ‘madness’. Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen*, p. 441-442.

⁷⁵² Sima Guang himself wrote a memorial, trying to persuade the emperor to only keep the shortened, 27-day mourning period (CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4804-06). In similar memorial Wang Chou lamented that the emperor was not attending to things, and asked the emperor to draw on ritual to ameliorate his strong sentiments about Renzong’s death (CB. vol. 198, p. 4816-17).

⁷⁵³ To give an example, he insisted that envoys be sent to the Qidan, to report the matter of the succession, and avoid any suspicion; he asserts that it is entirely according to precedent, and seen in the ritual classics, for the main line to adopt someone from a branch line as heir (CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4796). This is just the beginning of a long series of memorials on different topics.

open for the sycophants and flatterers to influence him with their evil ways.⁷⁵⁴ As such, his role as the one to dominate the public sphere appeared a bit like the one Ouyang Xiu had assumed in *qingli*.

The most important of the documents he handed in is the following memorial, which spells out what the guidelines for the regency should be in his opinion; as such it was heavily informed by Sima Guang's own political ideas and a sincere agenda, but also did not contain anything that the *qingli* 'good men' as such could not support as well, in fact one could argue that it resonated with many of the things the *qingli* reformers had said to Renzong:

The people are not blessed, the revered late emperor all of a sudden has left this world. The [current] emperor has succeeded to the throne, but unfortunately developed an illness, and cannot personally attend to government affairs; he respectfully invited Your Highness [the Empress Dowager] to with him decide on government matters. In my stupidity and humbleness I assume that Your Highness, in your concern for the importance of the ancestral hall and the state, and for the sake of implementing policies [beneficial] for the multitude of people in the realm, had no alternative but to assume this responsibility, it is not what you wanted in your heart. If the health of His Majesty the Emperor is getting better soon, Your Highness must withdraw and not linger on; if the medicines and stone needles have no effect, however, then, and only then, will Your Highness [have] to assume all responsibility for the myriad government affairs, and will not have the leisure to feel at ease [given that responsibility]. Therefore for all acts and activities, one must exercise the utmost caution and be very careful.

At present the power in the realm, is endangered by its precariousness, the small and the great fight with each other, and there are worries about many things. If the ruler and the minister are not of the same heart, and do not inside and out unite their efforts, not working hard day and night, in order to [publicly] see to the urgent needs of the dynasty, then how could one overcome one's regret once this [state of affairs] has led to misfortune and disaster? As to the basis of safety and danger, it lies in employing the right people; the mechanism to [bring about] order and [get rid of] chaos is reward and punishment; these two things must be investigated carefully. If for the multitude of offices inside and outside of the court you each get the right man, then the virtuous and capable will advance, and the unworthy will withdraw, the loyal and upright will be held dear, and the slanderers will be sidelined, then how could the realm be in peril? If for the offices you for the most part do not get the right people, then [...] how could the realm not be in peril? If rewards are not bestowed on account of Your Highness being pleased, and the punishments are not meted out on account of you being angry, the rewards unfailingly will retain their function as exhortation [to be good], the punishments unfailingly will retain their function as corrective [of the bad], then how could the realm not be well ordered? But if you bestow excessive rewards when you are pleased, and mete out harsh punishments when you are angry, rewards will be granted to those who did not earn them, and punishments will be applied to those without guilt, then how could the realm not be in chaos? If that is the case, then there is no other place [where] the safety or danger, order or chaos of the realm is [decided] but in the heart [and mind, that is, the inner state] of the ruler alone.

⁷⁵⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4807-08. In 8/1063 Wang Tao (whose promotion is also mentioned in the previous record) and Han Wei received promotions as tutors, together with the prince (CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4827).

[Sima Guang in the following passages shows his deep concern with the difficulty of getting rewards and punishments just right, comparing it to *yin* and *yang*, and goes on to criticize the late emperor in this regard:] It was in the nature of the late emperor to be benevolent to a fault, the accomplishments of officialdom at times were not worth to be mentioned and he already rewarded them handsomely, the crime might not be of the kind that could be forgiven, but the punishment was very light; now, good [people] will remain good [even under these circumstances], but the lesser people who did not know what great favor that was, at times were on the verge of being arrogant and haughty. I humbly think that when Your Highness from now on oversees government affairs, you surely [will aim to] redress that with strictness. If it were to be redressed with strictness, then that certainly would be right and proper, but the people of the realm have been comfortably off with the late emperor's favors for a long time; when laws and regulations were to be applied all of a sudden, they would be fearful and alarmed, and their loyalties would shift. I therefore wish that Your Highness would gradually and with righteousness teach them and admonish them, and only if there is somebody who would not listen and obey and still not be good, one then should apply criminal law to him, who would then dare to be disrespectful? This is the best of the good options.

In the past, when the late emperor first succeeded to the throne, the Empress Dowager Liu safeguarded His Majesty's health, ordered the whole world, promoted the virtuous and held the treacherous at bay, pacified domestic and foreign [unrest], and really has accrued great accomplishments on behalf of the Zhao clan. But it would seem that the ritual she arrogated to herself may have been excessive in its veneration [of her], and the vulgar and obscene among the in-laws may have been unworthy and defiling their government positions, and the slanderers and flatterers among the eminent ministers may have usurped the handles of power (i.e. rewards and punishments), this is why [she] was criticized by the realm. Today Your Highness for the first takes great government matters into your own hands, the people all over the realm, as one man will observe and listen in order to appraise your grand moral virtues. I am of the opinion that in all the titles and rituals that one may claim for oneself, one always ought to exercise profound self restraint, and cannot completely follow the precedent of Empress Dowager Liu, so as to perfect the appearance of modesty and deferment, fulfilling the hopes of the people everywhere. Great ministers that are loyal and of profound [virtue] like Wang Zeng, upright and honest like Zhang Zhibai, principled and righteous like Lu Zongdao, upright and straightforward like Xue Kui, Your Highness ought to trust such men and employ them, and in cooperation with them plan the affairs of the realm. Vulgar and obscene [ministers] like Ma Jiliang, that are slanderers and flatterers like Luo Chongxun, Your Highness ought to distance yourself from and expel them, they cannot be given a salaried position, when listening you should be very selective with what they say.

I have heard it said that women become part of the husband's family, and leave the parent's family behind, and in the case of empresses, or palace women and the state the same principle applies, [the empress and the state's] weal and woe are connected as one. If the Zhao clan is safe, then the people all are safe, and in this case the Cao clan without fail will enjoy the limelight of wealth and power for many generations. If the Zhao clan is not safe, then the people are uprooted, and although the Cao clan wishes to be the only one to be safe, how can that be achieved?! Therefore the one who governs [should] toe the straight and narrow, and the best Way to exercise government is to be absolutely unbiased.

I wish Your Highness would carefully observe the members of officialdom, if they have virtue and talent then elevate them, if there is success then reward them, and even if they are as humble as servants performing menial duties, and as despised as the worst enemy, even beyond the distance of 1000 *li*, none of them ought to be neglected, if that is the case then of the people who would not be moved? Among the members of officialdom, if there is one who does not fulfill his duties then dismiss him, if he is guilty of a crime then punish him, and although he is as high ranking as one of the highest officials, is intimate to you like a brother, and is as near as in front of your eyes and ears, none can be pardoned, if that is the case then of the people who would not be in awe? When the one who does good is spurred on, and the one who does bad is in awe, the myriad officials all have enough virtue and talent to fulfill their duties, the people happily go about their business [of agriculture], and the realm would be as safe as if it was leaning against Taishan and sitting in a plain, what worry could there still be! If that is implemented, then you wait until His Majesty's health is restored, [in order to] hand the task of ordering [the realm] over to him, while you yourself reside in the palace of 'Long Happiness' (as befits a retired regent), and in a relaxed way enjoy how all under heaven cares for you; in this way Your Highness' virtue of sagely goodness will surpass antiquity, and will

shine its light on posterity, and although there is Mother Wen of Zhou, and Mingde of Han, they are no comparison to you.⁷⁵⁵

This document is remarkable for several things: for once, it clearly expresses Sima Guang's criticism of the way the previous ruler exercised power, which in his opinion was not strict enough to have the desired effect, this came at a time not long after his death, when Renzong had not yet been interred. Note the similarities with some memorials of the *qingli* 'good men' when Sima Guang calls on the regent to get the right men, and take firm control of and use the handles of government, rewards and punishment, properly and in a balanced and careful fashion. That being said, it was also necessary to act carefully and slowly during the transition, given that the people had gotten used to Renzong's different ruling style (see 'Be Careful about Habits'). This clearly is Sima Guang's thinking and phrasing, and can be connected to his earlier writings, and our claim that he advocated a sincere worldview, when he announced here that everything hinges on the inner state of the ruler, that is, that she must exercise her power in the most impartial, sincere fashion, and unmoved by her own sentiments. However, at the same time this text also very much remains compatible with the public calls of the good men for their way of good, *activist* rule, and also can be read as a manifesto that sums up and accentuates everything that they had said earlier. In all of that it is surprising that the 'conservative' Sima Guang apparently did not consider female rule to be a problem as such, as long as it meant that the realm was governed in the right way. He insists that the empress should return control to the emperor as soon as his condition would allow her to do so, luring her with the advantages that a life as revered and retired regent would have for her as well; the only hint Sima Guang gives that there might be a problem with female rule is his nuanced account of the shortcomings of Dowager

⁷⁵⁵ CB. vol. 8. j. 198, p. 4799-4802.

Liu's regency, which results in some words of warning for Dowager Cao to be modest, and mindful of the fact that she needed to be impartial, and keep the interest of Zhao family and the state in mind to best serve her own relatives as well. But provided that she heeded this advice, she had the potential to become the greatest (female) ruler of all times. As a matter of fact at a later point we are informed by the sources that Dowager Cao indeed exercised modesty at the funeral, by being unassuming in all her accoutrements, and reducing her guard of honor by half compared to Dowager Liu.⁷⁵⁶ At times when the emperor seemed to get better, Sima Guang also hastened to hand in calls for her withdrawal; in other words, this is not to say that Sima considered female rule to be preferable over that of the emperor. But in some ways these and other calls for her to be perfectly impartial also were not specific to the case of a female ruler, since we have seen that he had demanded that of Renzong too, and had reprimanded him for his favoritism in the Xia Song case. In summary, as remarkable as that may sound, this document could be read as a constitution of sorts for the regency of Empress Dowager Cao, and an attempt to legitimize female rule from the perspective of literati ideals of government.

While the emperor still did not take an active part in government affairs, in 6/1063, reports emerged that the relationship between the empress dowager and the emperor had turned for the worse, and that he was not behaving in a filial way towards her. Sima Guang at that point handed in a memorial reminding both sides that they depended on each other; he warned that evil people intended to drive a wedge between the emperor and the empress dowager, but also highlighted the role and merit of the empress dowager in securing the succession at Renzong's death. When, in response to the dowager's complaints, Han Qi on the other hand publicly expressed his doubt

⁷⁵⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4830.

at the stories of Yingzong's insolence within the palace, given that he was perfectly docile outside of it, it transpired that of the core participants in the campaign for Yingzong's succession, Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu would side with the emperor,⁷⁵⁷ and Sima Guang would side with the empress dowager in that dispute, which soon would turn into a power struggle. While this is not yet the beginning of *puyi* proper, it is the moment when the alliance of 'good men' that brought about the succession of Yingzong developed the first apparent crack, and therefore any political account of the later *puyi* dispute is incomplete without both highlighting this campaign, its outcome, *and* the political break that had occurred before the debate itself took place. As we shall see below, however, the opponents would create the appearance that they continued to work for the same goal, or rather, express a similar opinion on the question of Yingzong's participation in government, albeit coming from two different sides: Sima Guang started to argue that the high ministers had too much power, and should be restrained, whereas these ministers took aim at the role of Dowager Cao in government; both, however, would call on the emperor to take a more active role in government given his recent recovery; in this way they continued the age old argument of the 'good men' that the emperor should be in charge of 'the handles of power', and personnel policy, and not let others usurp his prerogatives.

This brings us to the other, the ethical point to take away from the historical account of this political campaign and its questionable success: all of the participants, and especially those at the centre of it had acted in a manner that was ethically problematic by their own standards; Han Qi, Ouyang Xiu, and Sima Guang, at the very least, had colluded with each other *and* the empress

⁷⁵⁷ For Sima Guang's memorial, the report about a discord inside the palace, and Han Qi's suspicion of the empress's role, see: CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4813-16.

dowager to manipulate the emperor, go against his intention, and bring about the succession that seemed most beneficial to the cause of the ‘good men’, which also happened to be in their personal interest, because it promised continued influence for them and their allies. Again, there are plausible, ‘good’ arguments to be made for an ordered succession under these circumstance; as we have seen, Fan Zhongyan early on had made an argument for the utility of ritual and righteousness, and he and the core ‘good men’ of *qingli* at no point were averse to political maneuvers behind their exclusive and sincere rhetoric. We also should keep in mind the reason for the political failure of the *qingli* reform, namely that Emperor Renzong never had been convinced by their argument, and at no point had offered his unwavering support for the good men during the *qingli* reform. It was merely the logic next step to try and remedy this problem for the near future, and make sure that a number of ‘good men’, even with *diverse* opinions, would be in a position to persuade the next emperor and his successor of their selective cause, and once and for all turn the tide in their favor, so that henceforth ‘good men’ would be selected for all positions in government. Given an emperor who had no intention to rule, and a dowager who seemed entrenched in her position as regent, it would be hard to interpret the outcome as a complete success by their own standards, however, once they had mounted this tiger, so to speak, and set this process in motion, it was hard to dismount again and display any doubt about their own participation. Yet, even in the absence of any writing on this subject by the participants, it is safe to assume that their own, at least ambiguous, if not questionable ethical conduct in this political campaign, together with an outcome that was ambivalent at best, had increased the normative stakes they had in the game; in other words, they needed a result that best fit their values and ideals to justify to themselves the means they had chosen to attain this end. For Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu, that goal was to have a decisive emperor, and I will argue in the following

chapter that the political intention behind starting *puyi* and the preceding actions by them at court was just that, to increase the standing and confidence of Emperor Yingzong by getting rid of the direct political influence of the dowager that prevented him from ruling and acting on his own. Sima Guang, on the other hand, had expressed that he saw no problem with the regency, and although he never said so, judging by the text above it would seem that he preferred a decisive, prudent female regent who had shown her mettle over an emperor who also had already proven that he could not be depended on. Once more we see how the political and the philosophical are intricately connected and mutually reinforcing, without one side taking precedent, an observation that is even more pertinent for subsequent events.

Thus, in order to fully account for the ritual dispute, *puyi* 濮議, I will offer two perspectives on it in the following two chapters: the next chapter will look at it predominantly from the political angle of the struggle for power between the emperor and the empress dowager, starting with the first signs that something was amiss within the palace; the final chapter in this part will talk about it from the perspective of conflicting norms and ideals, juxtaposing the two positions that were offered on the ritual question, and showing why and how they now turned out to be incompatible when we had seen common ground earlier. What we will also see even more clearly in these two chapters is that politics and ideas are indeed intricately connected, and that it is hard to make a clear distinction between the two. More specifically it seems to me that the radical versions of these ideas, in the form that they were expressed by Sima Guang and others during *puyi*, very much are a product of these political developments, and especially the heightened sense of responsibility that all the associated ‘good men’ had for the normatively

good outcome of their endeavor; as such, the radicalization of their existing ideas and norms is inexorably tied to the political events and political culture of their time.

Chapter 4. Taking the political perspective: rejection of mitigating ritual causes a socio-political division, also known as ‘factionalism’

An article by Carney Fisher provides the most thorough description of the *pu(yi)* debate so far, although Ji Xiao-bin in the course of his biographical study of Sima Guang also heavily draws on it to support his point about the ‘special relationship’ he had with the imperial house. Arguing against a view that unfavorably compares *puyi* and other such incidents to seemingly pointless medieval scholastic arguments, Fisher instead proposes to take the debate seriously as expressions of an “intellectual climate” of the time, regardless if the issue as such is “understandable to modern readers.”⁷⁵⁸ The goal of this and the next chapter will be to show that it is possible to describe this dispute in terms that are universal, and in fact can be rendered understandable to ‘modern readers’ without recourse to differences in culture, while at the same time indeed being indicative of a specific intellectual and political climate. This chapter will do so by reappraising the political significance of *puyi*, that is, on the basis of the background described in the previous chapter we will fully acknowledge and bring to the foreground the role of the empress dowager in it, as well as her political connection to Sima Guang, both of which

⁷⁵⁸ Carney Fisher, “The Ritual Dispute of Sung Ying-tsung.” *Papers in Far Eastern History* 36 (1987). p. 109-138. p. 110. Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. chapter 5. Another quite thorough account in German is provided by Christian Meyer; here the background is also taken into full account. Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen*. part II, chapter 3, part III, chapter 3.4. See also the discussions in part IV about the positions of Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang, and Cheng Yi, respectively, during *puyi*.

hitherto have been overlooked,⁷⁵⁹ or not fully realized.⁷⁶⁰ At the same time we will see ritual in the original, the *qingli* sense at work in the political arena, and fail, both as a norm to be adhered to, and as a means to an end, or rather, to several ends, for it served both to correct a problem and gain political ground against the empress dowager and her supporters, and as a means to mend fences after it became clear that the remaining *qingli* protagonists would not win the argument in the public sphere.

Once again, we will also see similar ambiguities that we have encountered time and again in our narrative, at times concerning key questions, such as the one when the emperor finally was well enough to assume his responsibilities. Given the frequency of apparent relapses and recoveries from his ‘illness’, it is unnecessary to give a full account of the ups and downs in his condition for the year from Yingzong’s accession in 4/1063 to 5/1064, when the regency ended officially. Although there were intermittent reports of the emperor attending court audiences during this period, he predominantly did so in silence,⁷⁶¹ and apparently did not decide or say anything even

⁷⁵⁹ Carney Fisher provides part of the background of the succession and the discord between empress dowager and Yingzong (Fisher, “Ritual Dispute.” p. 112-113), and also notes the empress dowager’s role in deciding the conflict (p. 125-127), but describes it as largely passive, with the agency lying mainly with the chief minister Han Qi. Bol inserts the debate into his larger narrative of two sides – one advocating a government responsive to the people’s needs, and the other being opposed to institutional change. Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 213, 422n6.

⁷⁶⁰ Ji Xiao-bin discusses the reluctant adoption and the succession in detail (Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. chapter 4), as well as the dispute between Yingzong and Dowager Cao (chapter 5.1). He also realizes Sima Guang’s pivotal role in both that and *puyi* (chapter 5.2), and specifically the potential impact that the question had for the ritual status of the empress dowager herself at court (p. 98). It seems clear to me from all these events that Sima Guang’s ‘special relationship’ was with the dowager, not with the imperial house.

⁷⁶¹ Such as towards the end of 4/1063 (CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4804), when he received condolences behind a curtain. Supposedly he “did not grace the audience hall with his presence” in 6/1063, right after the news broke that he was not on good terms with the empress dowager. This prompted a memorial by Wang Chou to ask him to resume his duties, and use ritual to overcome his grief for Renzong (his *qing* 情) (CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4816-17.). On the other hand there are reports of intermittent audiences in 7/1063 and 8/1063 (CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4823; p. 4827). The latter account has the emperor listen to the reports in silence, which prompts a memorial by Wang Chou urging the emperor to make clear judgments.

when he was holding audiences. The sources do not explicitly state at these instances that it was the dowager who made the calls, but there were decisions made, and there were assertions later that the dowager had indeed decided on matters; we should also remind ourselves that the arrangement of holding court in two separate halls allowed for both sovereigns to attend audiences without mutual interference, and whether or not the emperor himself was well enough to attend. On the other hand there were some signs that the emperor's condition had improved permanently, firstly, the fact that it was possible for him to take part in some of the mourning rituals for Renzong, or to be cajoled by Sima Guang into doing so.⁷⁶² Secondly, his condition had improved enough by 12/1063 to take up and follow the customary readings and tutorials for emperors, although also with some reluctance.⁷⁶³ In other words, there was an emperor who put in more and more of a public presence at court, and clearly was much better, but did not actually decide or do anything in government. It is therefore hardly an understatement to describe this period as a severe constitutional crisis, with unclear hierarchies caused by two rulers holding court, and an emperor who again refused, or was prevented by the dowager's presence, to assume the active, supreme role as sovereign that he was supposed to play in the opinion of both Han Qi and Sima Guang and their supporters.⁷⁶⁴ For both of them, this was an untenable situation, and most of the actors on both sides at one point or another called on the emperor to finally assume the responsibilities of his position. Despite the crack that had appeared already in

⁷⁶² Again, Yingzong conducted the *daxiang* (CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4804), and after merely participating, or even being absent at first was cajoled into presiding over one of the *yu* 虞 memorial services by Sima Guang despite claiming to be ill (CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4830-32).

⁷⁶³ CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4839-40. Allegedly the emperor changed his mind about not having a lecture after a memorial handed in by Sima Guang, admonishing the emperor that this was one of the main tasks, which should not be abandoned for heat and cold. There is a second record for 4/1064 (CB. vol. 8, j. 201 4863-64).

⁷⁶⁴ Again, a point made by Christian Meyer, for him it was the constitutional problem of the weak emperor that was the motive for Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu to act and start *puyi*. p. 445.

the original association, on first glance the two sides at this point seem to call for the same thing, and equally admonish both the dowager and the emperor to mend fences with each other; Sima Guang, Lü Hui, and others during that period frequently called for the emperor to take more of an active stand too, and on the dowager to withdraw to peaceful life in the inner palace.⁷⁶⁵ As soon as the emperor appeared in court again, Sima Guang had also lectured him on his three duties as ruler, much as he had done with the dowager earlier, and moreover in a way that was most reminiscent of Fan Zhongyan's memorials on the matter in the thirties.⁷⁶⁶ There also was a memorial by Sima Guang that appeared to display his impartiality, for it reminded the dowager that Yingzong was ill, and that therefore his words should not be taken too seriously, aside from the assertion that there must be evil people in the inner palace that wanted to drive a wedge between the two rulers.⁷⁶⁷ On the other hand, both Sima Guang and Han Qi reminded the emperor that since antiquity the epitome of filial behavior was in fact to requite unloving parents with good behavior, and so serving the empress dowager should be done with utmost care.⁷⁶⁸ After all, all participants of the original campaign had a vested interest that the adoption they had helped to bring about be a success, and not be overshadowed by a continuing dispute between the two highest-ranking figures in the realm. The concurrent memorials by Lü Hui to officially

⁷⁶⁵ There is the 'constitution' for the regency by Sima Guang, discussed above, which called on the empress dowager to end the regency if the emperor got better. Wang Chou's memorial also has been discussed. Sima Guang calling on the emperor to decide government matters personally: CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4825-26; j. 200, p. 4854-55. The latter memorial criticizes that the emperor leaves all decisions to the ministers, and calls on him to be more filial towards the dowager. Memorials by Lü Hui to emperor and dowager, calling on the emperor to make decisions, and on the dowager to withdraw from government: CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4856-58.

⁷⁶⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4825. He promised the non-action (*wuwei*) of Shun once the ruler had implemented these things.

⁷⁶⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4832-34. This also talks about how nice it would be if the emperor would recover enough that he could govern himself.

⁷⁶⁸ Sima Guang: CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4835; j. 200, p. 4853-56. Han Qi: CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4838.

establish Yingzong's eldest son, the future Shenzong, as crown prince, could be interpreted as securing the succession of this line even if Yingzong's health would not improve any time soon, and even if the dispute continued.⁷⁶⁹

However, the way that Han Qi and Sima Guang phrase their respective admonishments also betrays the difference in their assessment of the ethics in this situation: Han Qi in fact said that even when the dowager should be at fault in her behavior, this did not give the emperor the license to be unfilial in return. Sima Guang on the other hand pointed out to the emperor how everyone knew that in fact the dowager had treated him with utmost love, and that it was his duty to console her; together with the rumors of plans to depose Yingzong that circulated at court concurrently, it in fact constitutes a clear threat. Seen from this light, Lü Hui's suggestion to install an heir suddenly also appears less benign for Yingzong, given that that would provide the dowager with a replacement candidate, and someone who still needed her tutelage at that; this observation is corroborated by the fact that Ouyang Xiu felt compelled to remind the empress dowager that the choice of heir had been made by Renzong himself, and that his decisions could not easily be undone without risking that people would not follow.⁷⁷⁰ In other words, there was a clear and present danger for Emperor Yingzong and his status as sovereign, because both the dowager and certain officials threatened him with the idea of deposing him.

⁷⁶⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4835-37. Here, Lü also laments that the emperor was not taking the decisions. Note also that the memorial to the dowager on this topic almost appears more prominent.

⁷⁷⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4838.

Despite superficially calling for the same thing, returning power to the emperor, Han Qi and Sima Guang in their statements show that they had a very different opinion on who was at fault, and especially the latter seems to connect his ‘support’ for Yingzong’s return to power to certain conditions, specifically regarding the emperor’s treatment of the Empress Dowager Cao. This becomes particularly clear in a series of memorials and audiences in 3/1064, when Sima Guang became even more explicit in his criticism, while still calling on the emperor to assume control over government decisions. At the same time, he also reminded the emperor of the merits that the dowager had accrued when assisting within the palace with Renzong’s decision to make him the heir, when securing his succession through her decisive action, and when taking over the regency on his behalf. In the audience he said:

I repeatedly begged Your Majesty to pay special attention to the support and care for [your parents] (that is, the dowager), and to attend in person to the numerous affairs of the state, but the way that I expressed that [apparently] was clumsy, and has not been blessed with being selected and accepted. But of all the tasks of the present time, there is none more important than these [two], therefore I dare not [to try to] avoid the executioners axe, and once more provide the argument in detail. I humbly think that the Empress Dowager is the mother, and Your Majesty are the son. The Empress Dowager for 30 years has already been the model mother for all under heaven, Your Majesty only recently has been brought into the main line of succession from the residence of a prince [of a minor branch], should there be an altercation between the two sovereigns, who does Your Majesty think will be disobeyed and who will be obeyed, who will win the argument and who will lose it? Moreover, Renzong’s kindness and virtue has been with the people, in fact it is ingrained in the very marrow of their bones; Your Majesty has received the throne from him, and has nothing that you [can] reciprocate that with, how will you then fulfill the hopes of all under heaven? If Your Majesty above loses the love of the empress dowager, and below loses the hopes of the people, then despite the fact that you have the exalted position of the emperor, how will you yourself be safe and secure? Everything that the ruler does to safeguard the dynasty and state, depends on him taking hold of the handles of rewards and punishments, therefore the people fear him like a divine being, and love him like a parent. Today Your Majesty already has been on the throne for close to one year, and the government affairs at court, the appointments as well as the rewards and punishments, all have been entrusted to the great ministers; not once have you inquired after the ins and outs of an affair, and investigated its right and wrong, and has there been something that was rewarded or punished (by you personally). I fear that the people above and below are getting used to this, and that the handles of punishment and reward are gradually shifting [to the high ministers], therefore although you are [nominally] ruling everything between the four seas, how can you then be firmly in place yourself? But a position that is not safe, and a rule that is not consolidated, what good would that do for Your Majesty after all? If Your Majesty assumes that failing to pay homage to the ritual status of the empress dowager in this way still is not mistaken, that failing to personally attend to the tasks of government in this way is not a problem, then in my humble opinion that is impermissible.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁷¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4854-55.

The threat that Sima Guang makes here is hardly veiled: if there was a final break with the empress dowager, who would he think would win? In other words, the fact that the empress dowager represented Renzong's generation, and had been the 'mother' to the realm for several decades trumped the status of the current emperor, and therefore his position was not secure if he did not pay homage to the ritual status of the empress dowager. Given what has been seen as the 'traditional' bias against empresses, this is a remarkable position. Moreover, leaving all decisions to the high ministers, read, Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu, would also not add to the stability of his rule. In short, Sima Guang attached several conditions to his support for Yingzong's personal rule, namely that he would pay proper respect to the dowager, and assume more responsibility himself, rather than leaving decisions to his ministers. The next passage is especially interesting in view of later events, because it draws on the example of Yingzong's service to the Prince of Pu to make the point that he needed to be more active in his reverence of the empress dowager and his handling of government affairs:

I have heard that when Your Majesty previously resided in the minor residence, when serving the prince of Pu, you did so adopting an obedient attitude, and did your utmost in fulfilling your filial duty; the Prince of Pu entrusted all the affairs within the residence to Your Majesty, and when dealing with them there was nothing that was out of order. Your Majesty's service to the empress dowager ought to be entirely the same as towards the Prince of Pu, then it would be acceptable, [nothing more, nothing less]; were you to view the government of all under heaven in entirely the same way as the affairs inside the residence, then that would be acceptable as well. In the event the parentage of the Prince of Pu was based on kindness, and the parentage of the empress dowager is based on righteousness, so if the careful attention paid to supporting and waiting upon her is not increased by a measure [as compared to that for the Prince of Pu], then there would not be enough to establish its credibility. The affairs within the residence were of a small scale, the affairs of all under heaven are of a much bigger scale, if one does not increase the diligence a notch when hearing and deciding cases, then there is no way how to attain order. If Your Majesty, when serving and waiting upon [the empress dowager] reaches the utmost of careful attention, and when listening and deciding reaches the utmost in diligence, then the fame of Your Majesty's benevolence and filial piety will spread to eternity, and the virtue of your outstanding astuteness will reach all areas, the imperial ancestral temple will be forever secure, and the sons and grandsons will receive the blessing [of becoming sovereigns], what harm would that do to Your Majesty that you for such a long time are unwilling to act in this way! The clarity of all these benefits and harms, is like black and white, the easiness of the choice between the two is like turning over your hand; if Your Majesty were to repent and change [the errors of your] thinking today, then it still would not be too late. If you defend your opinion tenaciously, and do not change the errors of your ways at all, then I fear that days and months will go by, and the enmity and altercation [between you and the Dowager] will be deeper and deeper,

and it will be impossible to mend fences again; government authority will be lost [to you], and cannot be recovered, and after that, despite regretting it, it will be too late.⁷⁷²

First, Sima Guang establishes a baseline for the efforts that Yingzong should make in both cases:

he should serve the dowager as he had his own father, and he should attend to the affairs of the state with the same earnestness as he had the administrative matters of his father's residence.

However, to really be up to both tasks, he needed to put in more effort than that, since, in case of the empress dowager, her relationship was based on 'righteousness' (*yi* 義), and not on 'kindness' (*en* 恩) as that to his father had been. In other words, righteousness trumped kindness in this situation, and because of that more of an effort was necessary to establish Yingzong's credibility as an adopted son. This was a political statement and a normative one, and while the latter will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, we should already highlight that Sima Guang here was the first to establish a strict hierarchy between the two terms that would dominate the *puyi* debate, kindness (*en*) and righteousness (*yi*); it was this hierarchy that Han Qi and company would later attempt to qualify in their own *puyi* memorial, and therefore the phrasing of this memorial is worth to keep in mind. At the same time, this exchange also is much more explicit than the later memorials about the political implications of this hierarchy of normative terms, for after asking to be sent to the provinces because his words were not heeded, Sima Guang in another memorial would state:

What I have previously expressed was my wish that Your Majesty would use the ritual with which you paid homage to the Prince of Pu to pay homage to the empress dowager, as well as the wish that Your Majesty would invite and question the body of officials, attending personally to the affairs of government. Today, although Your Majesty serving and attending the empress dowager has been improved over earlier times, it still is not matching the obeying attitude and heartfelt [nature] of the time when you served the Prince of Pu.⁷⁷³

⁷⁷² CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4855.

⁷⁷³ CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4855.

Earlier, Sima Guang had put it even more directly, when in an almost brutal way he pointed out to Yingzong that the Prince of Pu was dead, and that by all means he now should be free to “expend his filial care on the empress dowager.”⁷⁷⁴ What here served to support Sima Guang’s normative and political argument that Yingzong should acknowledge and respect the parental status of Dowager Cao, namely the comparison with his behavior towards his natural father, Prince Pu, later would be turned on its head by Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu; when they called for a discussion about the ritual status of Yingzong’s father, they did so to diminish and qualify the status of the empress dowager.

Conversely, in this exchange we see clearly that Sima Gang at this point does not seem to be overly concerned with the fact that the dowager was still exercising the regency, in fact he argued that she should retain a paramount ritual and hierarchical position at court, albeit removed from direct influence in government; accordingly, for him the burden of proof was on the emperor that he could indeed fulfill the ritual and administrative obligations of his position. While ostensibly always calling for Yingzong’s return, the constant warning that his position would not be safe, as well as the real threat of being deposed by the empress dowager show that despite the superficial similarity in what they called for Sima Guang and Han Qi stood on opposite political sides. Now is probably the time to make more explicit an argument what should have become clear by now: rather than with the imperial house as such, as Ji Xiao-bin has argued, in my view Sima Guang had a special political relationship with the Empress Dowager Cao, and later Empress (Dowager) Gao. To be sure, it would go too far to accuse Sima Guang of colluding with the inner quarters in the traditional form that had become a trope by now, which

⁷⁷⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4853.

usually involved eunuchs in some way or other, mainly because there is not enough evidence to do so; if anything Sima Guang in his public statements appeared to be critical of eunuch influence on the relationship between the two sovereigns, and was quick to blame their influence for causing and fanning the dispute between them.⁷⁷⁵ However, it is also true that Sima Guang always appeared very well informed about what was going on in the palace.⁷⁷⁶ Yet, the decisive piece of evidence for my assumption is his ‘voting record’, so to speak, because in all cases of political debate and campaigns known to me, and over a time period of over 25 years, he without fail took the side of the empress dowager and her interests. Even before this power struggle and the later *puyi*, we have highlighted his participation in the campaign for the succession of Yingzong, and in the previous chapter noted the two memorials he sent in to defend the ritual status of the empress dowager against attempts to ritually treat others in the same fashion. Seen from this perspective, even memorials that appear perfectly conservative fit the picture of an alliance with the dowager: in 4/1064, one month after his admonishment of the emperor was recorded, he handed in a memorial calling for more frugality in the inner quarters by following the old precedent of retiring and sending away ladies of the inner quarters after the death of an emperor. Specifically, he asked that “[...] one ought to [assess who] among the court women of the previous emperor had not been blessed with the attention of the emperor and produced offspring, or had not been given a more exalted rank, or was not in charge of writing, [...] and

⁷⁷⁵ Many of his memorials talk of evil elements wanting to sow discord between the two sovereigns, for an example, see: CB. vol. 8, j. 199, p. 4834. He talks about that to both the dowager and the emperor. Later, Sima Guang and Lü Hui would accuse Ren Shouzhong of being responsible; Ren subsequently was dismissed (CB. vol. 8, j. 202, p. 4897-4902).

⁷⁷⁶ Such as in a memorial to the empress dowager, where he talks in a detailed fashion about the situation in the palace, but assures her that he just heard rumors on the street, because of course as an outsider he did not have the means to know of the matters inside the palace (CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4874).

order each of them to return to their families [...].”⁷⁷⁷ For the same time, another memorial by Sima Guang has been preserved that demanded that henceforth palace women should be selected carefully, so that only daughters of good families would be chosen, not the rabble from the markets and barracks. Both of these demands are perfectly compatible with Sima Guang’s views on being economic in one’s expenses and on selecting the right people. The sources inform us that 335 palace women were released at that point, who in all probability indeed had been a considerable drain on expenses in the palace. But it is also true that with this purge, Dowager Cao was provided with an excellent opportunity to settle accounts with women that had offended her, or had acted against her in some way under Renzong, and at the same time take control over who entered the ranks of palace women, in this way strengthening her rule of the inner quarters at this point. We do not know the exact details, but we should remind ourselves of the earlier memorial that argued during the waning years of Renzong against giving those among the ‘Ten Pavilions’ higher ranks that did not have offspring, which would suggest that the stipulation could even apply to favorites as adored by the emperor as these, provided that their status had not been secured, or made official enough.⁷⁷⁸ Officials first had prevented such official recognition, and now Sima Guang handed the dowager the tools to settle accounts once and for all, since in Yingzong’s ‘absence’ it presumably was the empress dowager herself who decided on the implementation of this plan. Given our earlier findings on the general volatility and ambiguity of personal relationships, this consistency in Sima Guang’s support for the empress dowager is remarkable and deserves to be highlighted as such; however, it also has far-reaching

⁷⁷⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4862-63.

⁷⁷⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 189, p. 4567-68. It would seem that at that point the chancellery had declined to raise their ranks officially, and that Renzong had done so by personal rescript, which might make it possible to ignore it on technical grounds.

consequences for the subsequent political dispute itself, for if Sima Guang was firmly in the dowager's camp, this should give a different spin to many of the statements and arguments he made during this dispute.

At the same time, from the vantage point of his normative framework, the ideology of strict hierarchies, of getting the right people, and of decisive handling of the leverages of power, there are very good reasons why Sima Guang would support the empress dowager, first for her willingness to act on behalf of the state in the succession question, and then for the way she ensured the succession and took over government affairs in a decisive fashion; most importantly, however, in ritual terms she remained the highest-ranking, living representative of Renzong's generation, and as such of the continuity of dynastic succession itself. It is indeed very likely that Sima Guang was sincerely of the opinion that following his remonstrations was in the best interest of the emperor as well, as Ji Xiao-bin argues.⁷⁷⁹ However, there is no sign that this was supposed to, or actually gained him much leverage with Yingzong, as we shall see shortly, or that Sima Guang compared to the chancellors around Han Qi did more to strengthen the position of the emperor.

So far we have described and defined two political camps that had their origin in the campaign for Yingzong's succession, one taking the side of the empress dowager, and the other one supporting the emperor, and there is good reason to believe that such a division existed among these officials. Yet, true to the difficulties to clearly define political groups that were described in

⁷⁷⁹ Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*, p. 94, 108-109. See chapters 4 and 5 for the argument about Sima Guang's 'special relationship' to the emperor.

Part I of this study, in the events that led to the end of the regency, it once more proves hard to at all times uphold the clear boundaries between what we have called the emperor's men, and those of the empress dowager, because the first steps in this process appear to have been supported by both sides, albeit with different overall goals: the censor Wang Chou in 4/1064 called for an outing of the emperor with the carriages, to put the hearts and minds of the people at rest and perform a prayer for rain, and was seconded in that demand by Sima Guang.⁷⁸⁰ The idea was to show publicly that Yingzong was fit for duty, and in this way ease the transition towards his personal rule. The exchange that ensued when Han Qi insisted on such an outing in an audience may throw a telling light on the problematic political situation: the emperor told them to discuss that with the dowager; the dowager pointed to a relapse in Yingzong's condition and was dismissive of the idea; therefore Han Qi forced her hand by, falsely, claiming that it was the intention of the emperor to go, to which she replied that the guard of honor was not ready, and that one should wait for a while. Although Han Qi and Sima Guang finally prevailed and the outing took place, the similarities of Dowager Cao's strategy to the way Empress Liu had managed to appear modest and deferential, *and* keep her status at the same time (described in Part I) appear obvious; at the same time this exchange could have served as a sort of dress rehearsal for the later attempt to remove Dowager Cao from power once and for all, in which Han Qi also took the initiative and forced a decision in a situation in which both rulers were in a stalemate. But while Sima Guang did support the call on the emperor to take a larger profile in public and in government decisions, at this point he did not call for the empress dowager to withdraw from the regency (as opposed to Lü Hui), and made no noises that this ambiguous

⁷⁸⁰ Wang Chou's memorial and Han Qi's argument in audience to dowager and emperor: CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4862. Sima Guang's memorial in support: CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4864.

situation with two rulers and two audiences was a problem as such, for him the problem remained the great ministers and the behavior of the emperor, not the dowager.⁷⁸¹

Han Qi, however, supposedly had intended for the Dowager Cao to withdraw for a long time. As the source informs us, the empress dowager herself repeatedly had issued rescripts announcing her intention to withdraw from the regency, which then would be handed over to the emperor, who, however had retained them without acting on them.⁷⁸² Once again this should remind us of the technique Dowager Liu had used, to make public announcements that then were not put into practice in the way that had been announced, for reasons that appeared out of her control. Yet, this time the high ministers were unwilling to play along with her: to reiterate, the audience arrangements still were such that the ministers reported to both sovereigns, and so in 5/1064 Han Qi first went to see the emperor with more than ten issues to decide; when the emperor had done so to his satisfaction, he went on to see the dowager, had her approve each decision of the emperor in public, and after the others had withdrawn asked for an assignment to the countryside, on account of his old age. When Dowager Cao then contemplated about her own age, and her intention to retire to the inner palace as well, Han Qi congratulated her on her wisdom, which far surpassed other wise female rulers, and talked about setting a date for her withdrawal. Supposedly, the empress then rose in alarm, and Han Qi in a loud voice ordered the ushers of the audience to remove the curtain, where a small part of the dowager's clothes was visible from

⁷⁸¹ See the exchange above, which took place in the previous month (3/1064). Again, for Lü Hui's request for the dowager to relinquish government: CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4858.

⁷⁸² CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4865; the entire incident: p. 4865-4867.

behind the screen.⁷⁸³ Subsequently, Empress Dowager Cao's withdrawal from the regency and from decision making was announced, and the emperor resumed audience following precedent.⁷⁸⁴ Other than the bare facts, two memorials by Lü Hui also reinforce the impression that this was in fact a soft *coup d'état* of sorts, because he tries to ascertain that the intention to withdraw had indeed come from the empress dowager, and in fact all but states that it was illegal otherwise.⁷⁸⁵ This is also another instance of discord between Han Qi and Fu Bi, considered the last straw increasing Fu Bi's anger about Han, because Fu was not amused that Han Qi had not informed him of the plan, and certainly remained unconvinced by Han's assurance that there had been no such plan to report beforehand. It appears quite clear that it was Han Qi and company, rather than Sima Guang, who tried to safeguard the recovered emperor and had engineered a ritual coup in his favor, with the goal to clarify the administrative hierarchies at court and divest the dowager from her role and position in the decision-making process, while at the same time forcing the emperor to take a more active stand.

The subsequent praise by Wang Chou of the dowager's far-sightedness to hand back the handles of government of her own accord therefore sounds ironic given what we know of the events, although he does call for handsome ritual honors on her behalf, which were ordered to be debated by the ministers.⁷⁸⁶ While the public announcement in the dowager's own hand gave them not much recourse in the matter itself, supporters of the dowager such as Sima Guang could

⁷⁸³ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4866.

⁷⁸⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4867.

⁷⁸⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4867. In the second memorial, Lü Hui reminds the emperor that he should not intend to "monopolize" government, and look after the dowager with utmost ritual.

⁷⁸⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4867-68.

still openly speak out in her favor, which he did on the first occasion that offered itself. The memorial at the same time showed that the removal from direct government influence could have had immediate consequences for the dowager, and thus provides a motive for her attempt to hang on to it. We are informed that when the emperor finally fulfilled his role and asked the executive ministers how to remedy the problems of the time, after some other contributions, Sima Guang once again spoke up to emphasize the importance of filial piety and loving care for the empress dowager and the princesses. He also related his ‘worries’ that there would be instances of disrespectful behavior by staff in the palace, and that some goods that she ordered would not be provided, something that had been unheard of in the regency; once again Sima Guang warned against insincere flatterers within the palace that would try to sow discord between the sovereigns.⁷⁸⁷ In this way we see that the dowager losing her status as regent might have directly influenced her life within the palace, for palace attendants now appear to have attempted to ingratiate themselves with the newly independent emperor; it seems unlikely that Sima Guang’s hypothetical ‘worries’ would not represent the actual complaints of the empress dowager, since Sima Guang then goes on to make a somewhat surprising argument:

I have heard that the matters of the state are heard [and decided] by the ruler, while the matters of the family are heard [and decided] by the parent. In all humility I take it that at the time when Your Majesty is in the outer court, the administration of punishments and awards, demotion and promotion, ought to be decided following your own intention, but when it comes to the inner court, in regards to selection [of personnel] and bestowals, regardless whether the matter is important or not, it would be best to defer all of these [decisions] to the Empress Dowager and then implement them, since Your Majesty has no right of command of any sort vis-à-vis the Empress Dowager. In this way, the institutional framework inside and outside [the palace] would be rectified, and the hierarchy of superior and inferior made apparent. If that is not done, after the Empress Dowager has returned government to you, should the men of the guard be indolent in the slightest way, should the goods asked for and required in some small way fail to be supplied, or should it go so far that flatterers and villains undertake it to wantonly drive a wedge between (the two sovereigns), [in other words] if there is the slightest error, and [the rumor] spreads and is heard outside, in case the Empress Dowager becomes worried and unhappy, and within the palace contracts an illness or fever, then how would Your Majesty ever overcome that [bad] reputation in the realm!?⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4868-70.

⁷⁸⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4869.

In other words, Sima Guang called for a division of power within the palace, to make sure that the dowager continued to enjoy her previously elevated status at least within the palace. Once again, the emperor receives a warning of the negative consequences that it would have were he to act counter to the empress dowager's wishes, and in this way cause an illness. Sima Guang also offered the by now well-known admonishments that the ruler should take care to himself handle the leverages of power in a careful fashion, and not let others usurp these instruments of the ruler, as well as make sure that he is absolutely unbiased in his decisions.

Next, together with a decree conferring certain honors to the dowager, one also tried to order the procedure by which the dowager could order goods that she required. This prompted another lengthy memorial by Sima Guang, stating that the new procedure was too complicated, and effectively kept her from receiving what she required in a timely fashion. The proponent of economizing in government quoted the *Liji* to call on the emperor to not be stingy with the dowager, and simplify the administrative processes by which she could receive the goods she needed for her household.⁷⁸⁹ At the same time, the dowager received an elevation for her palace, and a relative of hers was elevated, against her protestations.⁷⁹⁰ In summary, despite the fact that the danger of the emperor being deposed or remaining powerless had been averted by the removal of the regent from the audience hall and Yingzong's subsequent return to personal rule, both in theory and in practice, the struggle between the two sovereigns at this point was not over, and the supporters of the dowager still continued to negotiate her exact status in the hierarchy *vis-à-vis* the emperor.

⁷⁸⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4870-71.

⁷⁹⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4871-72.

It is in this situation, still in 5/1064, that the chancellor Han Qi handed in the following memorial, which would provide the spark for the *pu(yi)* debate:

The chancellery requests to discuss the proper ritual stipulations for the Prince of Pu

Han Qi et al. memorialize: ‘We humbly take it that what emanates from an innate disposition has the name parental love, and what conforms to and hems in human sentiment is called ritual. Although one draws on righteousness to order things, one makes adjustments to the needs of current times; in terms of parental love necessarily the kindness [of a biological parent] is paramount, and in ritual one does not forget what it is founded on, this has been the unchanging, constant way from antiquity to the present. [We] humbly think that His Majesty the Emperor, stimulated by the vigor of the *qian*-hexagram, and thanks to the unambiguous [distinction] of the *li*-hexagram 離, protects the happiness and fortune of heaven and earth and all the spirits, and carries the heavy responsibility of the royal ancestral hall and the state. Since ascending the throne, benevolence is enacted so that it permeates even the marshlands, the nine degrees of kinship are in complete order, and the myriad countries have peaceful relations with each other. However, the Prince of Pu, posthumously named Anyi, in his abundance of virtue and with his eminent position, should have a solemn ritual [that befits his status]. Submissively receiving the command from the previous emperor, His Majesty humbly inherited the imperial succession, attending to the greater righteousness, and putting second the personal affair of the kindness [received from his biological parent], being cautious about [the latter] and placing importance on [the former], he did not enact things hastily. I and the others are unworthy of the honor to be chancellors, and really just heard what was talked about in the realm, saying that one should study antiquity to come up with a ritual, which should be informed by the demand to express [and thereby make measured] the sentiment; if it embodied the eminent kindness and all-encompassing love [of the emperor], one would hope that above it would serve to display how filial piety [is instrumental] in governing [the realm], and below it would strengthen the social customs. We humbly ask that this be delegated to the officials in charge, to discuss the ritual to summarily enact for the Prince of Pu and his three wives, to in detail decide what is appropriate for it, and implement it in a timely fashion.’⁷⁹¹

It was immediately decreed that one had to wait until after the *daxiang* ritual of mourning for the deceased emperor to discuss the matter, so it had no immediate implications for the status of the empress dowager, and it would in fact take one year until the debate started in earnest. However, as a mere announcement it already was bound to have consequences for the dispute at hand, for even as a question it put the option on the table to diminish, rather than preserve or elevate the hierarchical status of the dowager, and as such noticeably put her and her supporters on the political defensive. Hitherto, Sima Guang, as well as Lü Hui, had somewhat dominated the public realm with their memorials, the former in fact all but threatening the emperor; Sima Guang certainly had left no doubt that the empress dowager occupied the more eminent status on any count, be it her status as Renzong’s wife, or the act of adoption and her care for him both

⁷⁹¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4872.

before and after the succession. Memorialists would remind the emperor quite often of the fact that he hailed from a minor branch, a ‘lesser residence’ outside the palace. In fact, Sima Guang had specifically argued that it would be more acceptable, but actually not enough if the emperor were to serve the dowager in the same fashion as the Prince of Pu, because the dowager’s parental relationship (*qin*) to him was based on *yi*, righteousness, and to make it credible he needed to be more careful and meticulous in serving her than he had been with his father. Here, Han Qi and company offer a very careful and nuanced argument, which gave the principle of righteousness that Sima Guang had invoked its due recognition, but nevertheless also constituted a thorough rejection of his argument, by stating that the counterpart that Sima Guang himself juxtaposed it with, the kindness (*en*) of a parent, needed to be addressed in a ritual form as well, and in fact was paramount when it comes to parental relationships. In this way, they turn Sima Guang’s normative argument on its head, and used it to argue for a ritual status of the Prince of Pu that reflected his parentage; at the same time this memorial also all but rejected the political argument that Sima Guang had made time and again, and in this way would also solve a very real political problem that Yingzong had, in a situation in which the dowager drew on her indivisible status as his adopted parent to demand his homage. In other words, while framed as a question, this is not an open-ended one at all, and instead proclaims the self-confidence of the new rule, especially when reading it against the proclamations that the *qingli* good men had made earlier on Renzong’s behalf. It is a political statement that, despite its nuanced appearance, stakes out the emperor’s claim to ritual and familial independence in the strongest terms. Much when Fan Zhongyan acted ‘as if’ he was upholding Dowager Liu’s parental status within the palace, and purported to only change the other, the outside part of the hierarchical equation, this seemingly modest, mere ritual change had the potential to have profound consequences on the

dowager's standing at court. If this argument is correct, then this would mean that Sima Guang, when delivering his own demand on the emperor to serve the dowager like he had served the Prince of Pu, had himself provided the inspiration and language to Han Qi et al. to tip the balance of public proclamations in their favor, and regain the initiative. The very predictable order to postpone discussion until after the mourning does not take away much from its effectiveness as proclamation, for merely the potential that the status of the empress dowager could be diminished would act as a Sword of Damocles for her and her supporters, and serve to keep them in check politically.

This interpretation would also mean that Sima Guang, when delivering his earlier argument, had not been aware of its potential danger to be used against the dowager, and that the very idea that Prince Pu's ritual status could infringe on that of Emperor Renzong in fact had been put out there with this memorial by the chancellors. There is one piece of evidence that contradicts this claim, however. In a memorial that has caused some commentators to assume that Sima Guang had clearly stated his position early on,⁷⁹² dated to 4/1063, that is, at the very beginning of the new reign, Sima Guang appears to give the emperor clear instructions on what to do and what not to do when honoring his biological parents, namely to make sure that the demands of the main line are paramount, and that he not dare to look after his biological parents (*siqin*), which here needs to be translated in a much more negative way, however, as undue bias towards one's 'personal/private' parents.⁷⁹³ The passage in question in fact contained a medley of sorts of the positions that Sima Guang would later take in three different memorials, first referring in a

⁷⁹² Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. p. 97. Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen*. p. 269, n52.

⁷⁹³ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4805.

truncated form to the same passages of the ritual classics that we would see quoted in the later debate that would be the starting point for the first reply that Sima Guang offered in the name of Wang Gui;⁷⁹⁴ it also mentioned the examples of Han Xuandi and Han Guangwu, as well as four Han emperors considered examples of bad, waning rule that he would discuss in more detail in two memorials later.⁷⁹⁵ In conclusion of this part, he implored the emperor to heed his words, and not listen to ‘this suggestion’, which seems to refer to some form of favoritism to his own parents.⁷⁹⁶ Now, the first problem with this passage is that the reference to a suggestion is something of a non sequitur at this time, because as far as we know there was no such suggestion; the emperor was still in limbo between illness and recovery, and the government functioned through the newly forged cooperation of the empress dowager, the chancellor, and Sima Guang, who lent it legitimacy with his public statements; in this situation, such a suggestion made no sense politically. It made even less sense ritually, given that this was so shortly after the death of Renzong, for it would appear to be very unfilial at a time when there was yet no sign of or need for such behavior from the emperor or any of his entourage, especially given that Sima Guang himself in the other parts of the text gives testimony to what had to be Yingzong’s *exaggerated* filial piety, i.e. the illness allegedly brought on by the intense sense of loss he felt after Renzong’s death, which “went above and beyond what ritual required.”⁷⁹⁷ Moreover, it appears odd that Sima Guang here would anticipate three of his later memorials, and in a form that left out much of the intricate argument that he would make later, at times literally just leaving out a

⁷⁹⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4970-71.

⁷⁹⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4975-76; j. 207, p. 5030-5031.

⁷⁹⁶ For the entire memorial, see: CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4804-06. 上皇帝疏. QSW. vol. 54, j. 1184, p. 307-308.

⁷⁹⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4804.

few characters here that he would then ‘add’ to the other passages. This problem becomes especially clear when looking at the example of Han Xuandi and Han Guangwu, both of whom according to this passage “did not dare to give posthumous (imperial) titles” to their fathers and grandfathers.⁷⁹⁸ The problem is that this was a precedent brought forth by the chancellors in the initial exchange as an argument *for* honoring the Prince of Pu, precisely because Xuandi and Guangwu *did* honor their fathers as *huangkao*, and Sima Guang’s later, more intricate argument left no doubt that he knew and acknowledged that fact; his point then was to show that these had been different cases historically, the former being able to honor his father because the emperor he was succeeding belonged to the generation of his grandfather, whom he indeed did not honor with too exalted a title. The latter, Guangwu, in fact was an emperor re-founding the dynasty, and therefore was in his rights to honor his own ancestors, and still did so in a modest fashion.⁷⁹⁹ To make a long story short, whoever wrote or inserted this passage did not care much for the complex nature of the arguments Sima Guang presented later, in reply to points made by his opponents, and it therefore seems unlikely that this passage was part of the original memorial; if it had been, then Sima Guang would have set himself up for an easy defeat, given that the consensus was that these emperors *did* honor their fathers.⁸⁰⁰ It is true that, political implications

⁷⁹⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4805.

⁷⁹⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4975-76.

⁸⁰⁰ Meyer makes the point that Sima Guang appears to refer to this memorial in a later one (Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen*, p. 269n52, referring to CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5041), but of course if it was possible to insert a passage into one memorial, a reference could have been inserted into another one as well. Meyer also noticed that Xuandi indeed honored his father in this way, but fails to draw any conclusion from that. Note also another late 1063 text impressing the importance of the mourning rituals on Yingzong (QSW. vol. 54, j. 1185, p. 323), passages of which make the argument, repeated in *puyi*, that Yingzong should not forget that it was not his parents who allowed him to become emperor, and bear an uncanny resemblance to the respective passage in the ‘Wang Gui’ memorial (CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4970-71). Again, the point is that Sima Guang had a good reason to admonish Yingzong to make an effort in the morning rituals when he had been better and clearly was making excuses, even to quote the ritual locus classicus for adoption in this case, but there is no indication that his natural parents were in the picture in any way at this point.

aside, Prince Pu's ritual status posed a genuine ritual problem, but there would be no reason to address that at such an early date, and in such a cursory fashion.

At the same time, the 1063 memorial itself provides the occasion and a potential motive for someone to ex-post insert a reference to the paramount ritual status of Renzong as Yingzong's parent into this early memorial, since the remaining text could be interpreted as allowing Yingzong some leeway in terms of mourning rituals for Renzong, or at least not defending the orthodoxy very forcefully: on occasion of one of Yingzong's 'recoveries' Sima Guang here calls on him to *reduce* his mourning for Renzong to 27 days in response to public sentiment, and only mourn his adopted father for the full three years in ways that did not interfere with his government duties, i.e. inside the palace, and by being frugal in his personal life. This was nothing extraordinary apparently, as Sima Guang cites the precedent since the Han Dynasty, if in a somewhat disparaging manner; from a practical perspective it appears very sensible that a new emperor should not be too inhibited by his mourning duties during the difficult political transition from one ruler to the next. On the whole, this reads very much like the programmatic memorial to the dowager we have discussed earlier, reiterating Yingzong's legitimacy as an heir personally adopted by Renzong, giving him advice on how to act, including the three most important duties of a ruler, and warning him against bad advice. On one hand, this general theme and the reiteration of Yingzong's status as adopted son allowed the insertion of the passage anticipating the *puyi* argument, on the other hand does not make much sense without its counterparts in the actual debate. Given Sima Guang's later argument that Renzong's ritual status as adopted parent was irreducible and indivisible, some clarification of his stance might have appeared necessary. However, at this point in the early reign of Yingzong, it would seem

that Sima Guang was less concerned with Renzong's general ritual status, and more with Yingzong taking an active part in government and participating in proper rituals, a fact that also becomes apparent in a lesser ritual dispute a little later (1/1064), regarding the question how to treat Renzong in the upcoming *mingtang* rituals, when Sima Guang and Lü Hui argued *against* placing Renzong in an elevated position with Taizong and Taizu in the sacrifices, and for continuing the old custom of having Zhenzong take the third place in this ritual. He tells the emperor that someone serving a parent does not consider the amount of sacrifices to be filial, but instead values getting the ritual right, and points out that to elevate Renzong would be unfilial to his grandfather, Zhenzong.⁸⁰¹ Of course his opinion in the last question does make sense from a strictly hierarchical, dynastic perspective, in which Zhenzong is the emperor with the more eminent status; Sima Guang certainly is not merely always taking Renzong's side, a fact which makes it even more remarkable that he would always take the one of the empress dowager.

In my view, at this early point it was probably unthinkable to Sima Guang that the question of the ritual status of Prince Pu could become a political or ritual problem for the empress dowager or the late emperor, before the chancellors actually made it into one with their pointed question; otherwise he would have refrained from drawing on Yingzong's filial service to Prince Pu as a benchmark for Yingzong's behavior towards the dowager, since it opened himself up to precisely this question in return. Be that as it may, this episode not only shows how Sima Guang's ideas and arguments became more pronounced, more radical, and more 'sincere' in reaction to political events, it also could be a case where after the fact his texts were edited to make his

⁸⁰¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4850. For the entire ritual debate: CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4846-4852. Lü Hui's and Sima Guang's memorial, arguing that Zhenzong be kept in place: p. 4849-4850.

thinking appear more coherent and less ambiguous than it actually was over his lifetime. There is no indication that Yingzong's filial piety appeared to be in question for Sima Guang at this point in the beginning of the reign.

However, one year later, it would seem that Sima Guang reacted immediately to the threat posed by Han Qi's memorial, if we follow the chronology of the *Changbian*. He did so not by disregarding the stipulation to postpone the debate and arguing against it, this is not the beginning of the actual debate, which would take place another year later. Instead, he offered his most urgent admonishment to the empress dowager to do her bit in mending fences.⁸⁰² In some ways, this memorial therefore showed the very immediate impact that the chancellor's mere question had had on the political balance of power, for whereas Sima Guang earlier had almost exclusively talked about Yingzong's need to be filial to the dowager, he now called on *her* to refrain from harboring resentment against the emperor and the empress; despite the fact that it was justified to reprimand them when there was some wrongdoing, it would not do to keep treating them with discourtesy now that their behavior had apparently improved. He specifically called on the dowager to treat her niece, Empress Gao, with [more] courtesy in their encounters, as well as to stop listening to the evil slanderers who intended to increase and utilize the wedge they had driven between the two sovereigns. There also was a tone of warning in the missive, of the effect that rumors of unloving, as well as unfilial, behavior might have; Sima Guang also pointed out that what connected her to the emperor and the empress was a family relationship, which should be valued as such. The fact that he called for behavior that "entirely matches the ritual of family members" indeed is an interesting parallel to what he said to the emperor about

⁸⁰² CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4872-76.

the importance of treating the dowager ritually. Compared to the explicit warnings to the emperor earlier, and together with his otherwise supportive stance, this did not indicate a change of allegiance on his part, and indeed should not have given her reason to be cross with him.⁸⁰³ Sima Guang's changed tune did, however, reflect the different political situation, which had entirely been brought about by a ritual question that outside of this context might appear perfectly innocuous otherwise.

In this way, merely the proclamation of the chancellery on this minor issue would seem to have turned the tide, and helped to improve the position of the emperor specifically in the public realm, as several subsequent memorials showed. Lü Hui once again handed in memorials to both parties, and while the one to the emperor still bears an admonitory tone, it places the blame on eunuchs, and merely calls for reigning them in. The one to the empress dowager, however, actually contains the demand that she hand the 'tallies and seals' over to the emperor, which she apparently had kept under her control. This demand is only a little veiled by his conviction that it was in fact tardy clerks that were at fault, since, after all, what sense would it make for the dowager to relinquish the regency, but not the insignias of power? All the while, Lü offers lavish praise for her wise decision to end the regency, which made her a model for generations to come, since there are only few, if any, cases of such behavior in history. Lü's point is seconded in other

⁸⁰³ Ji Xiao-bin discusses the observation that Empress Gao was very generous to have supported Sima Guang later on to become chief minister, given that he had been so critical of her (Xiao-bin Ji, *Sima Guang*. p. 90). The fact that Cao seems to have been at odds with both the emperor and her niece, the empress, might appear to contradict the argument that it had been in Cao's interest to have the couple installed as successors. However, this is just another instance of the fragmentary nature of personal relationships, and how agency would not translate into the desired outcome. Later, during Shenzong's reign, there can be no question that the two empress dowagers acted together when there was a public occasion to do so, so I would argue that to in general separate Sima Guang's relationship to Cao from that to Gao in this way will in fact be difficult, despite the fact that apparently a dispute between the two took place at this time.

memorials by different officials, likening the seals to the imperial regalia in their significance, and demanding that they be handed over to the emperor in a timely fashion.⁸⁰⁴

While Lü's admonishment of the dowager in this matter once again speaks to the difficulty of drawing clear boundaries, or connections, between political positions, the promotions that were announced at this point for once allow a clear picture of the two sides; they gave final proof that a rift had occurred in the original association that brought about the succession of Yingzong, and was all but publicly recognized by the emperor: Yingzong failed to promote a single one of those memorialists in his favor that had been on the dowager's side in the recent power struggle, most importantly he ignored Sima Guang entirely, who had had such an important role in his succession.⁸⁰⁵ Instead, he did promote, among others, Han Qi, Zeng Gongliang, and Ouyang Xiu, as well as Fu Bi, which was a small inconsistency that on one hand showed that even the court at times seems to have had difficulties to define these 'factions', unless this was an attempt by his old *qingli* friends to mend fences and draw him back into their fold; on the other hand this promotion would make the break in the earlier association even more apparent: the newly promoted Fu Bi, in a series of angry memorials, declined the honor and publicly distanced himself from the promotions and his old *qingli* comrades.⁸⁰⁶ We should remind ourselves that he had been part of the campaign for Yingzong in the beginning, but then had openly supported Renzong's reluctance. Firstly, Fu Bi accordingly pointed out that his contribution to the succession had been miniscule compared to the one of the empress dowager, who was treated so

⁸⁰⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4876-77.

⁸⁰⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4878.

⁸⁰⁶ All memorials: CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4878-83.

badly in return. In fact “within and without the palace all know that at the time it entirely emanated from the secret instructions of the empress dowager.”⁸⁰⁷ She also supposedly had safeguarded Yingzong during the difficult times when he declined to accept the adoption, and of course in the succession itself and in his illness. Given these merits, and the fact that the emperor still was unfilial towards her and not adhering to the proper rituals for Renzong even after his condition had improved, one had to realize at court that his filial heart indeed was not perfect.⁸⁰⁸ Rather than promoting him, the emperor should first remedy these failings, and also make sure that the daughters of Renzong were properly cared for. It should be unsurprising from the perspective of our framework of ritual and sincerity that in this memorial he points to problems with the emperor’s inner state, and in the next memorial calls on Yingzong to “offer sacrifices to Renzong in the most respectful and careful way, and serve the empress dowager with an attitude of perfect sincerity and true ritual.”⁸⁰⁹ The picture of discord among the old allies is completed by the record a little later informing that both Sima Guang and Lü Hui argued against the promotions for the executive ministers, repeating some of the criticism that Fu Bi had made.⁸¹⁰

In the following months, the sources give the impression that Yingzong now did precisely what he was supposed to do as emperor, namely ask his ministers questions of a general and more

⁸⁰⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4879.

⁸⁰⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4880.

⁸⁰⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4882.

⁸¹⁰ (6/1064) CB. vol. 8, j. 202, p. 4893-95. Lü Hui’s memorial is attached to this record, in which he criticizes the wording of the edicts, and again refers to the empress dowager’s kindness towards him, but refrains from ascribing her a direct part in the succession. He also offered the example of an adopted emperor, Xuandi; here, this served as an example of modesty in the edict to appoint the official who had been instrumental in bringing Xuandi to power; in some way this also shows that the example had not yet been used to argue for the elevation of Prince Pu.

specific kind, and firmly decide accordingly.⁸¹¹ At the same time, it also would seem that the critics had not given up their cause, and despite recent events had some success: Wang Tao and Han Wei were promoted within Prince Ying's (Shenzong's) entourage, supposedly because Han Wei had become very close to the prince, and made sure that he would not act frivolous. Even more importantly from the dowager's perspective, the tutors were able to convince the prince and his brothers to adopt a most reverent attitude towards the dowager, prompting her to congratulate the executive ministers on their choice of tutors.⁸¹² Sima Guang and Lü Hui also finally presented the culprit for everything that had gone wrong in the relationship between the dowager and the emperor, by impeaching the eunuch Ren Shouzhong, and having him dismissed.⁸¹³ The long catalogue of Shouzhong's sins that Sima Guang enumerated included the banishment of the brother of Yingzong, Renzong's reluctance to name him as an heir despite supposedly having harbored the intention for a long time, and literally everything that went wrong in the relationship with the empress dowager after Yingzong had come to the throne.⁸¹⁴ The corresponding footnote seems to show that this was indeed a case of factionalism, because it informs us of reports that Han Qi tried to call for leniency, by pointing to some merits that Ren Shouzhong had also accrued during the succession.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹ Such as in interc. 5/1064: CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4884.

⁸¹² CB. vol. 8, j. 202, p. 4892-93. This passage also contains a report on how the empress drew on the prince and his tutors to convey her intention of promoting her relative Cao Yi to a high position to the executive ministers. While Han Wei and another tutor declined and admonished the prince, Wang Tao went along with the request. This throws an interesting light on the record of Cao Yi's promotion, because it is said that the dowager declined the promotion for her relative, and only yielded after some time (CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4871-72). Note that according to the footnote there this comes from Sima Guang's diary.

⁸¹³ For the whole account, see: CB. vol. 8, j. 202, p. 4897-4902.

⁸¹⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 202, p. 4898-4900.

⁸¹⁵ However, these reports are contradictory.

During this period, Sima Guang as well as Lü Hui would frequently disagree with the Han Qi and company, and their concrete differences in opinion and ideals would become more and more obvious. As an example, I would like to point to a lengthy discussion in 11/1064, triggered by plans of the chancellery to make improvements regarding military preparedness. Han Qi specifically argued that one could expand the existing *yiyong* 義勇 militia scheme to resemble the Tang *fubing*, which in turn had been the closest approximation to the ancient system of farmer-soldiers.⁸¹⁶ While different in its institutional details, this is reminiscent of Fan Zhongyan's plan of reviving the *fubing* during the *qingli* reform, which at that time had been disputed among the 'good men' themselves. Together with the earlier proposals made during the late Renzong reign, we therefore see once again how closely Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu still tried to follow the gist of Fan's 'Ten-Point Memorial' in their plans since their reinstatement in the 1050s, albeit with less pomp and circumstance, and with different institutional stipulations. Yet, while Yu Jing merely had pointed out that this would be a hardship to the people, Sima Guang, in a series of memorials, offered a combination of practical and normative reasons why this was a bad idea, a reasoning that was driven by his idea how form and content should be connected: firstly, the founders had managed to unite the realm without a militia, and in fact with a smaller army, which implicitly meant that the ancient system was not the only successful one.⁸¹⁷ Secondly, in his view, the problem was that the system of (militia) soldiers would produce empty numbers, the training they received would merely remain an outward appearance, and the fact that the soldiers came from among the people might have been reminiscent to the ancient system in name (*ming* 名), but its reality (*shi* 實) was different. The concrete reason for this was that, if one were to keep the

⁸¹⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 203, p. 4914-15.

⁸¹⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 203, p. 4918-19.

professional army and establish a militia at the same time, the farmer families would be burdened with two duties to the state, namely to provide the financial means for the former, and the manpower for the latter. As long as one could not at the same time disband the standing army in provinces where a militia was established, it would therefore be too much of a burden to do so.⁸¹⁸

In other words, it is now, *after* the advent of hierarchical crisis and divisive political struggle, after Sima Guang had decided that the chancellors were ‘bad’ people, that we see him fully develop his practical and theoretical argument in the political realm against deviating from the example of the founders, go against the idea of reviving the ancient institutions, and openly disagree with Han Qi on questions of practical policy and the role of antiquity in it, to the point where this time the latter was the one who “was unable to reply,” and thus marked as the outsider, the ‘bad’ one in this debate.⁸¹⁹ Given what we have seen in the second chapter, these arguments certainly are connected to what he had said and thought before, and his criticism might not have been unfounded, if driven by a very narrow, normative idea about what the state should or should not do. It seems to me, however, that this strict interpretation of the founders’ stipulations cannot be separated from Sima Guang’s personal sense of responsibility in a situation in which he had helped to bring the current, less than perfect emperor to the throne, an emperor from a secondary branch, who seemed oblivious to the importance of the dynastic line and hierarchy, who was willing to elevate his own parents vis-à-vis the legitimate previous emperor and the dowager, who disregarded the stipulations of the founders in his actions, and endangered the dynastic

⁸¹⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 203, p. 4920.

⁸¹⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 203, p. 4922. Han Qi argues that even the hearsay of a large army has an effect, but Sima Guang counters that that effect is gone when it becomes known that it is not based on reality. The other question is whether or not Han Qi could guarantee that the militia would not be transferred to the regular, professional army, if not by him, then by someone else later.

legitimacy in the process. Under these circumstances, even the limited flexibility with the founder's intentions, the willingness to negotiate, which Sima Guang had exhibited before, under an emperor whose legitimacy was never in doubt, was given up entirely, and gave way to a firm vision of dynastic stipulations that served as a stopgap measure in an already bad normative and political situation. To underline the importance of his point, Sima Guang also once more asked to be transferred or dismissed if his advice was not heeded. In this way, this exchange would foreshadow the later disputes about the Green Sprouts Loans, or the Militia Act, measures that despite their practical importance should not have been central to the existence and legitimacy of the dynasty, but were loaded with normative meaning by both sides in the debate.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, for one year after the question about the ritual status of Prince Pu had been published at the end of the regency in 5/1064, nothing happened. Nothing was done for Yinzong's natural parents, except for enfeoffing their second son to make up for the death of his eldest one, and thus ensure the continuation of sacrifices for him.⁸²⁰ Officials that, judging by their memorials, could be identified as supporters of the empress dowager disagreed publicly with those of the emperor, and especially the censors around Lü Hui may have been a nuisance, to the point where they were ignored at times,⁸²¹ but for quite some time there was no indication that these disagreements were threatening to bring upheaval to the government, or that they were important enough that the censors would insist on their dismissal, and not just ask for it. It was only in 3/1065, that Lü Hui appeared to up the ante, when he complained about the fact

⁸²⁰ (10/1064) CB. vol. 8, j. 203, p. 4911.

⁸²¹ In the *fubing* question, Sima Guang devoted an entire memorial to the fact that he had been cut out of the decision-making process, and when he complained, been told that the order had already been implemented (CB. vol. 8, j. 203, p. 4921). This leads to a long diatribe about the importance of censors and their access to government decisions, similar to the one by Lü Hui.

that the censorial staff was ignored in their pleas and admonishment, did not have access to the decision-making process, and was blocked from criticism after the fact by pointing out that it already had been implemented.⁸²² In another memorial, Lü Hui called on the emperor to accept the resignation letters, customarily handed in on grounds of old age by Han Qi and the other high ministers of the *liang fu*, because they were indeed old and feeble, and unable to deal with the problems that the dynasty faced.⁸²³ However, this time around, it was much harder to see a firm causal relationship between concrete political events and the edict of 4/1065 that would finally open up debate on the ritual status for the Prince of Pu.⁸²⁴ After all, it could just have been time to address the problem now that the mourning for Renzong had been completed. On the other hand, there is circumstantial evidence that the renewed question had political significance as well: for once, one could of course have rephrased it; leaving it apparently unchanged from the earlier form, with its undeniably political and normative thrust against Sima Guang and the dowager, must have sent a message to Han Qi et al.'s opponents. The second hint was the way that the drafting officials (*liang zhi*) responded to the order to discuss the matter: we are told that at first the academicians looked at each other and nobody dared to reply, and only Sima Guang was brave enough to write a suggestion in response, which then served as the draft for the clerks to copy.⁸²⁵ The memorial itself will be part of the following chapter, suffice it here to say that the

⁸²² CB. vol. 8, j. 204, p. 4952-53. It goes almost without saying that he asked for his dismissal. This memorial is also interesting because Lü voices the idea that the emperor might want to do the opposite of the previous emperor, who allegedly had been known to change his orders after censors criticized them.

⁸²³ CB. vol. 8, j. 204, p. 4956.

⁸²⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 204, p. 4957.

⁸²⁵ It would seem that Sima Guang was among the officials addressed by the order, for here he is called *Tianzhangge*-academician (CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4971). In general, the chronology is quite hard to establish, as Meyer noted (*Ritendiskussionen*, p. 268-269), for there seemed to be longer periods of time between the events, at least as they are recorded in the *Changbian*. The edict that started the discussion was sent down in 4/1065, but the reply is recorded under 6/1065.

memorialists argued against the claim that the kindness of parental love should have any influence on the ritual, and maintained that Renzong's role as adopted father was of such importance that he should be the sole orientation for the ritual for Yingzong's natural father. Accordingly, they suggested to treat him following the precedent of respected relatives, and provide him and his wives with a handsome fief and position.⁸²⁶ Note that what the sources paint as bravery by Sima Guang, actually allows for a different interpretation too, given our earlier observation that the implicit argument of the question was directed against and disputing what Sima Guang had said earlier: at first, this memorial and the next one were handed in and published under the name of Wang Gui et al., and not under Sima Guang's own name. This led to the curious situation that all memorials about the issue referred to the argument Sima Guang had made as 'Wang Gui's suggestion', including Sima Guang himself in his own initial memorials about the topic. In other words, the actual author, and, in our view, the target of the original question was hidden from public view at this point, at least until Sima Guang later publicly admitted to being the author. This hidden authorship, together with the fact that Sima Guang, while rejecting the chancellor's position in general, had refrained from making a concrete suggestion as to what Prince Pu should actually be called, speaks to it that Sima Guang was very aware of the political implications and dangers of this move, and attempted to proceed with caution when he made his argument public.

However, the chancellery would not let him off the hook so easily, for in their next order they would admonish the *liang zhi* to remedy the oversight of their first reply, where they had not spelled out explicitly which address should be used for the Prince of Pu, and whether his

⁸²⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4971-72.

personal name should be used or not. Now, the reply by ‘Wang Gui et al.’ suggested to call him ‘august uncle’, *huangbo*, but a subsequent memorial by Lü Gongzhu in which he made his divergent opinion known shows that even the opponents of the chancellery had different views on this question.⁸²⁷ For different reasons, the chancellery also argued against it, criticizing that the suggestion failed to refer to any pertinent precedents, and pointing to the example of the Xuandi and Guangwu emperors of Han using the address *huangkao*, august deceased father, in similar situations. Note that *kao* is a term specifically used to ritually address a deceased father, and as such an especially egregious infringement on Renzong’s status. However, they made out that this is not an explicit suggestion, and instead merely purported to mention relevant precedents, otherwise calling for more discussion on the matter. Nevertheless, the political dimension of these relevant precedents should become immediately apparent, and should be interpreted as an attempt to diminish the ritual status of the empress dowager. Accordingly, this suggestion triggered a harsh response by the Dowager Cao against this infringement on her and her husband’s posthumous status, to which the chancellors replied that there was just no precedent for Wang Gui’s suggestion. Once again, an edict was handed down postponing the discussion until more research had been done, possibly to take the momentum from the opponent’s protests, and keep the pressure up at the same time; yet, a number of memorials still were submitted in defiance of this edict, and by officials involved in Yingzong’s succession, namely Fan Zhen, Lü Hui, and Sima Guang, who claimed that public opinion was in favor of ‘Wang Gui’s suggestion’.⁸²⁸

⁸²⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4972. In Lü’s view, the address *huangbo* was not acceptable, since Zhenzong had addressed Taizu in this way, plus *kao*.

⁸²⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4973-75. Note that Wang Gui had authored the edict appointing Zongshi as prince, and thus in some way had been involved in that as well.

In 8/1065, torrential rains triggered two more memorials by Sima Guang and Lü Hui;⁸²⁹ Lü Hui straightforwardly connected these to the *puyi* question, whereas Sima Guang in a more subtle fashion pointed to the alleged mistreatment of the dowager and the princesses, to the fact that high ministers were usurping power, and that the emperor was not handling criticism from the censors in an impartial way, and instead left these matters to the same ministers who were supposed to be kept in check by this public scrutiny. All of these points of criticism, of course, could be said to be pointing to the *puyi* question, although it is not mentioned by Sima Guang in this memorial. Instead, he urges the emperor to remedy these three pressing problems of the times with utmost sincerity, to avoid losing the hope of the people; while overall refraining from drawing too direct a connection between the disasters and the problems he sees in Yingzong's conduct, he still promises the emperor that utmost sincerity had the potential to move the people, and empty words and insincerity would not suffice to move heaven, and remedy or avoid disaster. Overall it soon transpired that the 'chancellors' would be unable to stop the dispute this time, and have their question remain undecided, for now an exam essay took sides in the issue,⁸³⁰ Lü Hui urged the emperor not to postpone this matter anymore,⁸³¹ and finally started to attack Han Qi directly as a factionalist.⁸³² This memorial is also interesting from the perspective of the question of government activism (*youwei*), because one of the arguments of Lü Hui was that now was the time for *da youwei*, great activism, but Han Qi was not up to this task and should be

⁸²⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 4984-90. Here, Sima Guang himself points to the dowager's part in Yingzong's succession (p. 4986).

⁸³⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 4998-5000.

⁸³¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 5010-11. He also asked to take the matters out of the hands of the government.

⁸³² CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 5011-13.

dismissed.⁸³³ Numerous calls followed to decide once and for all who was in the right, and to dismiss the other side.⁸³⁴ In 1/1066, the chancellery finally reacted in two ways: they published a reply to their detractors, refuting the claims made against them and their suggestion in the matter in the strongest words, and leaving no doubt that they considered the matter settled;⁸³⁵ secondly, they also engineered behind the scenes what was a classic political compromise between the main parties and interests of the dispute, that is the dowager and the emperor.⁸³⁶ Later, Ouyang Xiu would try to dispel the notion that he and Han had masterminded what could only be called a ritual exchange and recognition of each other's position.⁸³⁷ However, his story is less than credible, and one probably should follow the *Changbian*, and in fact almost everyone else, in their assumption that the following exchange was staged.⁸³⁸ The plan was that the dowager would order the emperor to use the titles *huang* (imperial majesty) and empress (*hou*) for his father and his wives, and otherwise refer to Prince Pu as *qin*, parent. This would take the contested term *huangkao*, for deceased august parent, off the table. In return, the emperor would modestly decline the imperial titles that the dowager had suggested, and instead would only use

⁸³³ CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 5013.

⁸³⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5023-25.

⁸³⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5025-29.

⁸³⁶ For a description of how the compromise came about and how the chancellors looked at each other and laughed when the message came, as well as Lü Hui et al.'s immediate response, see: CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5029.

⁸³⁷ 濮議本末. QSW. vol. 35, j. 744, p. 187. To provide an alibi of sorts, Ouyang Xiu reported how Han Qi was not present in the chancellery that day, and in an almost comic fashion described the scene when the remaining chancellors were looking at each other in surprise and did not know what to do; because Han Qi had to be summoned, there allegedly was no time to talk to each other before the audience with the emperor; he then goes on to relate their public part in the deal, namely suggesting the compromising reply to the emperor.

⁸³⁸ The *Changbian* alludes to it, and contains Lü Hui's memorials spelling it out. CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5029, 5032, 5034-35.

the address *qin*, and have a sacrificial hall erected at the now redesignated graveyard of his parents.⁸³⁹

In other words, this was a ritual compromise both in terms of the original question, but also in the way both parties staged the exchange, when they ritually deferred to each other and acknowledged the role, interests, and *renqing* (human sentiments) of the other party. Much like the *qingli* concept of ritual discussed above, the very act of exchanging these orders and letters served to mend fences and bridge an otherwise unbridgeable divide. By nominally leaving the decision to the dowager, the emperor recognized her supremacy in this question of family ritual, whereas Dowager Cao in turn acknowledged his legitimate interest in looking after his deceased father, and address the Prince of Pu as such, given the circumstances of his adoption. In exchange, Yinzong reaffirmed the indivisible legitimacy of the Song line of succession and Renzong's place in it, and more importantly for Cao, her own title and position as empress dowager, by declining to use imperial titles for his parents. In this way, the immediate political and ritual question concerning the status of and relationship between the two sovereigns had been solved at this point, while still adhering to Ouyang Xiu's view that it was impossible for Yingzong to not call the Prince of Pu 'father' in some way or other.

However, rather than solving the crisis in the public sphere, the attempt at compromise had made it worse, because the censors time and again reiterated that any title that contained the meaning father was unacceptable, and expressed their outrage at the clandestine way that the compromise had been brought about. It is at this point when a dispute that hitherto had also followed a

⁸³⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5030.

political logic exclusively became an ideological one, because the censors in fact did not accept the decision made by the empress dowager and the emperor. Instead, they started to lash out against female influence in government (with the notable exception of Sima Guang),⁸⁴⁰ and accused the chancellery of having misled both the dowager and the empress to the detriment of the dynasty. It also did not help that there initially were rumors that the empress dowager's suggestion would be entirely implemented, and the Prince of Pu henceforth addressed as imperial majesty.⁸⁴¹ Instead of giving in, Lü Hui and the others announced that they would refuse to go to office, and stay at home to await their punishment and force a final decision from the emperor, either for or against them.⁸⁴² After some back and forth, that is, more memorials from the censors, as well as attempts to order them to return to work, Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu finally pointed out that one thing that the censors said was indeed correct, namely that the emperor had to make a decision in the matter, and either dismiss the chancellors or the censors.⁸⁴³ The dismissal of the latter was ordered, if under the stipulation that they were still to be treated leniently, and while there were some more protests, pointing to the important role and sanctity of the censors,⁸⁴⁴ and officials demanding to be dismissed as well,⁸⁴⁵ the political *pu(yi)* debate had all but found an

⁸⁴⁰ Fan Chunren for example asks why the empress dowager needs to get involved, which, however, might still be a reaction to the original edict that went further than the compromise (CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5033). Others such as Lü Hui would accuse the chancellors of duping the empress, falling back on the old technique to criticize sovereigns by blaming evil ministers (CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5035).

⁸⁴¹ See Sima Guang's memorial, talking about the rumors on the street to that effect (CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5030-31).

⁸⁴² CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5029-30.

⁸⁴³ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5037.

⁸⁴⁴ By Han Wei, among others, because he ordinarily had been in charge of the dismissal orders, and was circumvented. CB. vol. 207, p. 5037. See also the repeated memorials by Sima Guang, first, to keep the censors, and then to be dismissed with them. QSW. vol. 55, j. 1192, p. 71-76. The edict with Yingzong's justification: CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5043-44.

end, and shifted to a discussion about censorial rights and duties, which, however, from a political perspective worked quite similar to what we have seen in *qingli*, where the public, vocal group had been the one with less actual power.

Yet this time the gain in terms of reputation was harvested by Sima Guang and the others, and they also held on to a position that proved to be politically important: as mentioned above, their ally Han Wei served as tutor to the future emperor, Shenzong, and had managed to sway the crown prince in favor of the empress dowager; henceforth he would remain either neutral or openly on the dowager's side. It was this fact that caused the chancellor's political success to be as short-lived as Yingzong turned out to be, since when Shenzong ascended to the throne, he would almost immediately declare Yingzong's decision to have been a mistake, and name Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu as the culprits in the matter, in this way reversing his father's compromise.⁸⁴⁶ When looking at these events from a political perspective, we see that most participants in *puyi* came from the same political alliance, which had cooperated temporarily to achieve one circumscribed goal, to bring about Yingzong's succession, both because they believed in it and it was to their advantage.⁸⁴⁷ However limited this goal might appear, helping an emperor to succeed to the throne had the potential to have far-reaching consequences, since it secured the access of 'good men' to political power for the near future. Due to the unforeseeable political circumstances of Yingzong's unwillingness to be the pawn of the dowager, it came to a rift

⁸⁴⁵ Returning censors ask to be dismissed as well, and Sima Guang, admitting that it was his memorial to begin with, and that he should be dismissed accordingly: CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5040-42.

⁸⁴⁶ (3/1067) CB. vol. 9, j. 209, p. 5082-83. Technically his interlocutor, Wu Kui, pointed to Han Qi's responsibility, and in fact his having been recommended by Han Qi previously.

⁸⁴⁷ This echoes a definition of factions offered by Carney Fisher, "The Ritual Dispute." p. 114.

between the associates, namely Sima Guang, Fu Bi, Lü Hui, and others on one hand, who broadly speaking appear to have taken the side of the empress dowager, and Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu on the other, who generally took the side of the emperor. However, the problems with defining clear factions that have been discussed in Part I still apply, since for quite some time all of these actors appeared to argue for the same thing, namely more involvement of the emperor; only in the nuances did it become apparent that they had different ideas on how this more direct involvement of the emperor should look; therefore, it turned out to be difficult to locate the exact point at which they stopped cooperating and became opponents, until the court itself provided more clarity, in the way it promoted one side, and failed to promote the other. Yet, even then the case of Fu Bi shows that the court was unwilling or unable to recognize his actual political position in the matter. At the same time, members of what we have called the pro-dowager ‘faction’ at different times displayed different attitudes towards Empress Dowager Cao; while there can be hardly any doubt that Sima Guang had a special relationship with the Cao family and the empress dowager, and always took their side in public, other allies of his in the *pu(yi)* debate would openly attack Dowager Cao and her decision in the matter, and her undue influence on politics. In other words, even in this case, the opposition was not a monolithic group, and predominantly defined itself by being against the chancellors, their suggestion, and the underlying norms, rather than having a clear, positive ideology that they would have shared. The case of Lü Gongzhu showed that this diversity included the core issue in the debate, namely the proper appellation of the Prince of Pu, on which Lü Gongzhu disagreed with Sima Guang et al.

From a political perspective, the seemingly unrelated ritual question that would lead to the *puyi* debate was an attempt to shift the ritual balance between Yingzong and the empress dowager in

favor of the emperor, by calling her status as parent into question; this was part of a larger effort to regain the initiative and adjust the relationship between the dowager and the emperor, after Yingzong's accession had led to a regency and unclear court hierarchies and an overbearing dowager. Earlier, the chancellors had regained effective control of the administration for him in a coup that ended the regency as an institution, but also had ritual implications, as the comparison with one of Fan Zhongyan's first political acts shows, when Fan attempted to shift the balance of power in favor of Emperor Renzong under Dowager Liu's regency by changing the regent's ritual status. In combination, these two acts had considerable success, and put the dowager and the opposition on the defensive in 1064. It is not quite clear why the question was put back on the table in 1065, but a political motive is likely, possibly hoping to again intimidate the opponents, or looking for a way to remove Sima Guang should his response incriminate him in any way, or make him look like a crony of the empress dowager. Yet, Sima Guang's response was published under a different name, thwarting the attempt, and after he felt that a vocal part of officialdom was supporting his argument and criticism, Sima Guang finally handed in a memorial in his own name on the topic. After several months of back and forth, and a lot of rhetoric that is reminiscent of the factional accusations and techniques of attack used earlier by the *qingli* good men, the political problem was solved in a compromise with the empress dowager, hoping in vain to end the normative debate as well, which intensified instead.

In all of this, we see Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu make use of ritual in politics on many different levels, both to attack their opponent *and* to strike a compromise when the situation called for it, both in *what* ritual they argued for and *how* they framed, and changed, their own solution to the problem. Once again we see that they had their strong opinions on what ought to be, but that in

political practice these two *qingli* reformers were no radicals, and only called for the dismissals of their opponents after several months of protracted debate, and when it had become clear that the compromise had failed to solve the deadlock. On the other hand, the comparison to certain positions Sima Guang had expressed before Yingzong's accession show how his existing views turned into more and more radicalized demands and arguments in the course of these events, and made a compromise impossible; we have argued that the political break with his old allies in the succession campaign, as well as his sense of responsibility for the result of this endeavor, caused this change in how Sima Guang framed his response to the current crisis. This shows the potential of politics to make ideas more radical, yet, we have also argued in the introduction that norms took precedence over practical considerations in these debates, which is why the following chapter will look at *puyi* from a philosophical perspective.

Chapter 5. How to be sincere in a complex world – or – who is the hypocrite?

In the previous chapters we have seen a narrative of political events during the first years of Yingzong's reign and the *puyi* debate that made the argument that there are clear political motives detectable behind this dispute, which on the surface seemed to be exclusively about a normative question, motives that had to do with securing for oneself the advantages gained with the successful campaign for Yingzong's succession, and addressing the unforeseeable problems brought about by Yingzong's reluctance to rule and his 'illness', as well as defining his relationship to the dowager after he 'recovered'. We have, however, also noted that the exact political fault-lines even at this point remain hard to define clearly, even for contemporaries, as

the ‘accidental’ promotion of Fu Bi showed, as well as the fact that not all of Sima Guang’s allies were at the dowager’s side at all times in the debate. Overall, it seemed more to the point to describe what happened as the dissolution of the earlier political alliance that brought about Yingzong’s succession, rather than a clash between two pre-existing associations defined by different, existing ideologies, notwithstanding the fact that certain ideological differences did exist beforehand. For the case of Sima Guang, who in the debate provided the ideological underpinning to the opposition, we have seen that it was a combination of the political crisis, the break with former political allies, together with his own sense of responsibility for a reign that from a normative perspective was not going well, which led him to radicalize his ideas, or rather, to radicalize how his existing ideas would translate into practical suggestions and criticisms. Here now an attempt will be made to look at the problem from the normative perspective, and discuss these two opposing philosophical positions that in this accentuated form would thus be both a consequence of the political divide *and* still be the cause for the *puyi* debate.

The normative problem that had appeared with Yingzong’s succession could be described in the following way: there was an adopted emperor who apparently found it difficult to fit into his role as such, politically, personally, and socially. While medical explanations were presented at first, it slowly transpired with the dispute between the two sovereigns that it might be more than that, and the officials of the original alliance increasingly felt the need to provide normative solutions to this situation. The goal, most important to the existence and functioning of the state, was to help Yingzong become a functioning member of the court (society) again, enabling him to take his place in the government hierarchy and fulfill his decision-making duty, but also regulating the relationship with the dowager in a way that allowed him to function properly as head of state,

while still giving Dowager Cao her due in terms of status. Sima Guang, together with Lü Hui, at first dominated the public arena with their admonishments for the emperor to pay his respect to the dowager, and to take political power into his own hands, with an emphasis on the former. Whatever ties Yingzong had had with his old family had to be severed, and all his energy expended on serving his adopted mother and fulfilling his responsibility to the state. Both would be essential to being a successful, good ruler, and despite our assumption that a closer political connection existed between Sima Guang and the empress dowager, given his ideas about hierarchies and dynastic legitimacy it is also plausible that he was genuinely of the opinion that reverence to her would serve an important purpose in a successful rule.

As we have argued in the previous chapter, therefore the *puyi* debate did not in fact start with the actual question about the ritual status of Yingzong's father, but had a precursor that has been overlooked so far, when in the course of the rift between the two sovereigns Sima Guang called on the emperor to be at least equally, or preferably more filial to the dowager than he had been to the prince, and established the two normative terms 'kindness [of/for a parent]', and 'righteousness', demanding of the emperor to make more of an effort on account of the latter now than he had earlier on account of the former. In fact, in his first memorial in this series he directly expresses his views on Yingzong's familial status in an almost brutal way: "since Your Majesty has become the heir of Renzong, it follows that the dowager is your mother; at this point the Prince of Pu is gone, what part of your heart you so far in your life have not exhausted with regard to filiality and care for your parents, if you do not expend it on the empress dowager, then what use will it be!"⁸⁴⁸ Both in the physical sense, and in terms of his social relationship to

⁸⁴⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 200, p. 4853. For the memorial bringing up *en* and *yi*: p. 4854-55.

Yingzong, the Prince of Pu in Sima Guang's mind had to be cut off, leaving Yingzong free to 'expend' his filial behavior on the dowager, mend fences with her, and become a good member of society again. So while doubt has been cast earlier on the veracity of one early memorial that purports to anticipate his *puyi* argument almost verbatim, in this exchange we see that Sima Guang before *puyi* proper, in principle, had already argued that Yingzong's father had been cut off by the adoption, when it transpired that the relationship between the two sovereigns was in a crisis. At this point it is worth remembering that as far as we can know Yingzong never wanted to be adopted, or to succeed to the throne, and in fact had to be forced by threats to accept the former and leave his familiar environment, and practically manhandled to acquiesce to the latter; Sima Guang now added to this series of involuntary acts, by demanding that the father be cut off, calling on Yingzong to act contrary to his human sentiments again. In other words, Sima Guang was in fact the first to strike the blow in the socio-ethical question that would underlie *puyi*.

The chancellors, Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu, aside from the political problem that we have described in the last chapter, therefore also faced a normative one, for as long as Dowager Cao occupied the paramount position in the administrative hierarchy *and* the social one, by virtue of being the only living parent, it was hard for Yingzong to gain the independence and sovereignty to fulfill his position properly. After solving the former problem by removing Empress Cao from power in what we have called a ritual coup, it therefore would be a logic next step to question the absoluteness of the statement that the prince 'was gone' as well, and in some way reflect and make measured Yingzong's sentiment towards his parents, which is what the normative thrust of the now famous question was:

The chancellery requests to discuss the proper ritual stipulations for the Prince of Pu

Han Qi et al. memorialize: ‘we humbly take it that what emanates from an innate disposition has the name filial love, and what conforms to and hems in human sentiment is called ritual. Although one draws on righteousness to order things, one makes adjustments to the needs of current times; of parental love necessarily the kindness [of a biological parent] is paramount, and in ritual one does not forget what it is founded on, this has been the unchanging, constant way from antiquity to the present. [We] humbly think that His Majesty the Emperor, stimulated by the vigor of the *qian* hexagram, and thanks to the unambiguous [distinction] of the *li*-hexagram 離, protects the happiness and fortune of heaven and earth and all the spirits, and carries the heavy responsibility of the royal ancestral hall and the state. Since ascending the throne, benevolence is enacted so that it permeates even the marshlands, the nine degrees of kinship are in complete order, and the myriad countries have peaceful relations with each other. However, the Prince of Pu, Anyi, in his abundance of virtue and with his eminent position, should have a solemn ritual [that befits his status]. Submissively receiving the command from the previous emperor, he (Yingzong) humbly inherited the imperial succession, attending to the greater righteousness, and putting second the personal affair of the kindness [received from his biological parent], being cautious about it and placing importance on it, he did not enact things hastily. I and the others are unworthy of the honor to be chancellors, and really just heard what was talked about in the realm, saying that one should study antiquity to come up with a ritual, which should be informed by the demand to express [and thereby make measured] the sentiment; if it embodied the eminent kindness and all-encompassing love [of the emperor], one would hope that above it would serve to display how filial piety [is instrumental] in governing [the realm], and below it would strengthen the social customs. We humbly ask that this be delegated to the officials in charge, to discuss the ritual to summarily enact for the Prince of Pu and his three wives, to in detail decide what is appropriate for it, and implement it in a timely fashion.’⁸⁴⁹

Interpreting this as an open-ended question could hardly be further from the truth, since for literati trained to look for cues in exam questions, this text provided many pointers what direction the solution should take, and in fact all but anticipated the outcome in its phrasing, especially when reading it against what Sima Guang had said about *en* and *yi* previously. Yet, this question also does not deny that the empress’, or rather, the dynasty’s interests are valid, once again the sequence of importance for things is emphasized, firstly by acknowledging that righteousness has its place in the grand scheme of things, and secondly in the way that the emperor is lauded for taking care of the ‘public’ issues first, before turning to the ‘personal/private’ one of parental kindness. To counter the strong claim made before that the

⁸⁴⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 201, p. 4872. Two chapters in the ‘Memorials by various officials of the Song Dynasty’ are devoted to memorials written for the *pu*(*yi*) debate, but except for the three initial memorials by Han Qi et al. they mostly contain dissenting views, omitting, for example, a long reply by the government (CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5025-29); another exception are two more or less moderate memorials towards the end of the chapters, one of which was authored by Cheng Yi, if handed in under a different name (For a discussion of these, see: Meyer, *Ritendiskussionen*. p. 286, 518-525). It therefore can be deceptive to overly rely on this collection. *Songchao zhuchen zouyi* 宋朝諸臣奏議. 2 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999. vol. 2, j. 89-90.

empress was entitled to Yingzongs undivided filial attention (and we should note again that at that point it had indeed been the empress that was to be the primary beneficiary in Sima Guang's mind, not Renzong), it declared that the disposition of Yingzong towards his father was endowed by heaven, and therefore legitimately should find an expression in *li*, ritual, after taking care of 'righteousness', that is, *raison d'état*, in an appropriate way since the beginning of his reign. In other words, this is the same partition of ritual demands and righteousness that we have seen with the *qingli* 'good men' since the beginning, and specifically with the theoretical and practical suggestions of Fan Zhongyan in 1029 concerning the ritual division between government and family hierarchy that this dissertation started off with; then as well, ritual had been supposed to be divided to give each side their due, while still making a political point as well.

As was to be expected, this argument failed to convince Sima Guang, who under the name of Wang Gui and others, and over a year later, handed in the following memorial. In the last chapter we have offered political explanations for this charade, however, Sima Guang's behavior also may speak to a more general insecurity if this argument indeed would be able to carry the day with his peers ideologically, and not be interpreted solely from a political perspective of him being the champion of the dowager.

[In response to the request given to the right], we would with all necessary care go with the following quote: *Yili*, *sangfu* chapter: 'an adopted heir for someone.'⁸⁵⁰ The commentary says: 'Why three years? The one who received the important task [of continuing the lineage for somebody] must mourn him employing the three-year mourning period [customary for parents]. He is like a son to the paternal grandparents and wife, the parents and brothers of the

⁸⁵⁰ In terms of structure of the *yili*, all the entries are under a specific mourning period, and therefore prescribe this period for x in relation to y; in this case, under the full three year mourning period, "an adopted heir for someone". Then "someone who has been adopted, for his father and mother" under a one year mourning, and then "someone who has been adopted, for his brothers" under a nine month period, all reduced from their original duration by one degree. See translation of the *Yili* by Steele, who, however, interprets this as "a man for his adopted heir", following the structure of the other entries ("a father for his eldest son/heir"); it seems to me, however, that in the context it makes more sense to read this as "the one who has been adopted by someone else". John Steele, *The I-Li or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*. 2 vols. Taipei: Ch'engwen Publ. Co., 1966 (reprint of 1917 ed.). vol. 2, p. 11.

wife, the sons of brothers, of the one by whom he was adopted'. 'He is the same as a son' means that in all [of these relationships] he is like a biological son. It also says: 'The one who has been adopted will sacrifice [in mourning] for his father and mother [equivalent to a one-year mourning period].' The commentary says: 'What is the length of the mourning period? It is not another mourning period for the parents, but why is it not another mourning period for parents? Because he puts an emphasis on the main lineage [of the adopted parents], and reduces [the mourning period for his biological parents] to that of a secondary branch of his. It is also said: 'The adopted one reduces the mourning period for his [natural] brothers'. The commentary says: 'why is it a mourning of nine months? The adopted reduces [the mourning period] for his brothers!' When looking at it taking these things into consideration, then someone who is the [adopted] heir of somebody becomes his son, he does not dare to again pay attention to his own, 'private' love/parents.⁸⁵¹

Drawing on commentaries, this refutes the claim made in the question that the 'private', *qin*, or *en* for that matter, can be of any relevance for the question of ritual. The reason for this is that this ritual is indivisible, as 'Wang Gui' goes on to explain in what essentially is a sincere interpretation of ritual:

When the sages instituted ritual, in [terms of] reverence, there could not be two [who shared] the topmost position; this is because if a heart-mind of respect and love is divided and expended on someone else, then it cannot exclusively and unilaterally [worship] this one, [that is, the adopted father]. Therefore, since the Qin and Han Dynasties, when the monarch had someone from the collateral branch brought in to inherit the line of succession, if the father and mother were indeed revered as emperor and empress, all realized that this wronged the actual emperor, and thus it drew the ridicule of later generations; [therefore] we do not dare to refer to [these precedents] to become a model for the present dynasty.⁸⁵²

Our analysis that Sima Guang's vision of ritual is a sincere one relies on two related claims he makes: firstly, ritual for him is merely supposed to reflect the one norm that is pertinent to this question, the indivisible nature of Renzong's ritual status as parent; secondly, because successful ritual appears to depend on how focused the practitioner's inner state is on the task at hand, that is, how sincere he is, it was impossible to allow oneself to openly acknowledge someone else as parent.

This is the time to remember how difficult it was to persuade both Renzong and Yingzong of the adoption, for it is only with this background provided in Chapter 3 that we fully realize how

⁸⁵¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 5971.

⁸⁵² CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 5971.

ethically problematic the following claims are that Sima Guang makes under the name of Wang Gui et al.:

In fact, when in previous generations somebody was brought in to succeed, more often than not that was after the death of the emperor, and the political decision to enthrone [that person] either originated from the empress dowager, or from the ministers. This is quite unlike [the present case of] Emperor Renzong, who, at an age where he was not yet feeble, and pondering deeply the important responsibility [of continuing the] royal ancestral temple, respected and carried out the will of heaven and earth, and among the many members of the imperial clan chose Your Majesty, to assist in the great enterprise [of continuing the dynasty]. By his own accord, Your Majesty was made the son of the former emperor, and then succeeded to the throne and inherited the imperial sacrifices, and gloriously came to rule over all under heaven. Although [it is true that] the Prince of Pu, Anyi, had a close relationship to Your Majesty that was of a natural kind, [based on] the kindness of the loving care of a parent, it is solely on account of the virtue of the former emperor that Your Majesty possesses the position and insignia of an emperor, owns everything in the realm, and will have his sons and grandsons succeed him through ten thousand generations. We are stupid and shallow, and do not comprehend either antiquity or the current situation, humbly we are of the opinion that the ritual stipulations to be employed in the worship to Prince Pu in every way should completely abide by the precedent of previous reigns of granting the elevated one year mourning period of a senior relative. High official or grand feudal titles should be the utmost limit of his honor and glory, and the Lady of Qiao, and the Lady of Xiang, as well as the Dame of Xianyou County, also should be promoted to the ladyship of a great fief. When investigating this in antiquity and the present day, we have established the fact that this is how they should be addressed.⁸⁵³

Here it cannot be emphasized enough what we have found earlier, namely that Yingzong's succession for all we know had in fact been brought about by the empress dowager and a coalition of officials, notwithstanding the fact that the public decision had ostensibly been Renzong's. We see that not just the human sentiments of the participants, but also the truth of the matter came second to the greater good, and as such, the previous emperor's claim was paramount by virtue of the importance of the succession and its legitimacy, which made any other form of parental worship impossible.

While pointing in the 'right' direction, that is calling for the same treatment as for senior relatives and a brother's [son], the memorial made no reference to the exact address; it is unclear why the author(s) refrained from being explicit about this, but it seems to exhibit more insecurity about what the exact appellation should be, and the political implications of such a concrete

⁸⁵³ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 5971-72.

suggestion for the memorialists; be that as it may, the chancellors drew on this to criticize ‘Wang Gui’s’ reply:

Humbly perusing in detail what Wang et al. have memorialized, we have not seen them be specific enough in their judgment as to with what degree of relationship as a relative the Prince of Pu should be addressed? Should his name be tabooed or not? We would like to request that Wang Gui et al. once again be delegated to detail the decision and report it in a memorial.⁸⁵⁴

The chancellors clearly intended to force the opposition to unequivocally state what address they suggested. This they did in the next text:

The two drafting offices and ritual officials repeat their suggestion to use the address ‘august uncle’

I and the others have consulted in detail (the precedent) of the eighth year of the *dazhong xiangfu*-era (1015) of Zhenzong, when the Prince of Chu Yuan Zhuo was considered an august elder brother and ordered to be tabooed. When Renzong ascended the throne, the Prince of Jing Yuan Yan was elevated as an august uncle, without being addressed by name, in the 5th year of *tiansheng* an edict was granted that his name be tabooed. This is the precedent in the reigning dynasty of posthumously honoring an elder relative. Now, the Prince of Pu should be considered an older brother of Emperor Renzong, by the [current] emperor he accordingly should be addressed as ‘august uncle’, *huangbo* 皇伯, and not be named. Respectfully prepared and reported in a memorial, we humbly await the imperial order.⁸⁵⁵

It becomes apparent that they were unable to name precedents for the address *huangbo* that would actually apply to this situation of an adoption, the ones they do refer to are only pertinent if one follows their earlier argument that the locus classicus and its commentary stipulated that the natural father should not only be *mourning* like a brother of the adopted father, with a one year mourning, but also *addressed* as such. This is the exegetical question where the interpretations differed, as we shall see, for the opposition did not differentiate between the two. However, the mourning periods for Prince Pu and Renzong was not the issue here, or at least one that was not talked about, since Yingzong had already mourned for his father as father, and for Renzong in a reduced way, due to his ‘condition’, but also as was customary during imperial

⁸⁵⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 5972. The *Changbian* version is truncated, however, for the full memorial, see: *Songchao zhuchen zouyi*. vol. 2, j. 89, p. 958.

⁸⁵⁵ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4972. Again, the memorial is shortened here, for the full one, see: *Songchao zhuchen zouyi*. vol. 2, j. 89, p. 959.

successions, which sacrificed some ritual for the expediency of a smooth political transition; we have seen that Sima Guang himself had consented to reducing the mourning for Renzong for the latter reason.

As mentioned before, even one of the critics of the chancellors, Lü Gongzhu, in a memorial immediately contradicted their suggestion as unsuitable as well, since that was too close to what Zhenzong had called Taizu, *huangbokao* 皇伯考.⁸⁵⁶ While still purporting to pose an open-ended question, the reply of Han Qi et al. on the other also clearly expressed their criticism, and staked out their exegetical position on the matter:

In accordance with a rescript from inside the palace, the Hanlin scholar Wang Gui and others have declared: ‘I and the others have... (see previous memorial).’ We solemnly point to the Yili ‘one who has been adopted by someone else, offers [mourning] sacrifices to his [own] parents’, and refer to the language of the order in the *Wufu nianyue* edict, where it accordingly says: one who has been adopted, for his [adopted] father performs a three-year mourning period [as for one’s parents]. An adopted son observes a reduced mourning of the second degree for his [natural] father and mother’; it follows that the son who was adopted as an heir both addresses the adoptive and the biological parents as ‘father and mother’. Also, Xuandi and Guangwu of the Han Dynasty both named their fathers ‘august deceased father’ (*huangkao*). For the suggestion of calling him ‘august uncle’ that now comes from Wang Gui and the others an unambiguous, pertinent stipulation [or quote] has not been found in the ritual codes. Humbly we ask to hand down [the question] to the secretariat, the combined *sansheng*, as well as the censors to decide on a suggestion and report it in a memorial.⁸⁵⁷

Again, Han Qi et al. appear to leave the verdict open just yet, but now they also offer a more specific counter-argument based on the language used in the ritual stipulations, which not only does not say anything about calling the natural father ‘uncle’, but also continues to call natural parents ‘father and mother’; in addition to that, there are historical precedents for the address ‘august deceased father’ (*huangkao*). Together with the assertion that there is no precedent or stipulation for the address ‘august uncle’ in this case, this delineates the solution that in their

⁸⁵⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4972.

⁸⁵⁷ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4972.

view would be acceptable, namely some form of addressing the Prince of Pu and his wives ‘father and mother’.

The mere reference to *huangkao* caused a strong reaction from the opposition, since the appellation *kao* had a central place in parental mourning rituals, and thus constituted an infringement on Renzong’s status, an outrage exemplified in another memorial by Sima Guang, this time under his own name. Note that technically the discussion was supposed to be suspended at this point until more research was done, following a rescript from the dowager herself complaining about the suggestion of the chancellors, expressed as reference, to call Prince Pu *huangkao*.⁸⁵⁸ At the same time, said memorial by Sima also makes a new claim about public opinion, which adds another dimension to the argument about publicness that had been offered in the 1030s and 1040s:

Talking about the ritual stipulations for the Prince of Pu

I have heard it said that the sage in deciding matters, complies with the common will of the majority (*zhong*), and therefore is able to be in harmony with the hearts and minds of the people below, and be in accordance with heaven’s will above. The Hongfan chapter says: when three people practice divination, what two of them say is to be followed. It must be that if the country is in doubt about something important, then it is decided by the majority, this has been the case since the earliest times.⁸⁵⁹

As seen in Part I, the *qingli* ‘good men’, or more specifically, Ouyang Xiu, saw the function of a public discussion in providing a diverse range of information to the sovereign so that he could make the right decision, but also would be kept from personal favoritism by the checks that such publicness provided; this public scrutiny would also ensure that the information provided was accurate, because falsehood could easily be detected by the audience. As such, it already had a

⁸⁵⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4972. Fan Zhen and Lü Hui also ignored the order, the former pointing to the duties of his office (p. 4972-73).

⁸⁵⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4975. See also: 濮王箴子. QSW. vol. 55, j. 1192, p. 63-64.

normative role to play in good government, but it was not providing the correct decision itself, which remained with the sovereign. In practice, however, we have seen that the ‘good men’ already in *qingli* had told the emperor what to do and what to decide, regardless of their reluctance to provide some theoretical grounding for that. Sima Guang, however, here takes the next step, and adds the idea that what the majority clamors for was actually the right decision already, and in accordance with both the hearts and minds of the people *and* heaven’s will, which is why it should win the day over the other, mistaken arguments. Given the *Hongfan* reference, which clearly talks of a majority, the word *zhong* 眾 has been translated accordingly. In other words, in this situation where it would seem that the emperor and the ministers were about to make the wrong decision in this matter, Sima Guang made the step towards positing correct, ‘rational’ decisions made *by* the public, rather than just *in* the public sphere, that the *qingli* ‘good men’ had still refrained from earlier; in this way, he in fact closes the last gap towards a Habermasian interpretation of *Öffentlichkeit*. Given that this argument takes the first place in this memorial, it would also seem that his own confidence in the persuasive power and straightforward message of the pertinent sources was not very strong.

On the other hand, the fact that they had asked the public of the relevant offices to debate the matter and make suggestions, implicitly shows that Ouyang Xiu and company had not changed their mind in principle about what role the public could take in the decision making-process, or in political proceedings for that matter. This contrast between *qingli* and *zhiping* ‘good men’ would become clearer when Ouyang Xiu later, long after the debate had been settled, responded in two ways directly to this claim that the majority, that is, the ‘public’, had the ability to find the right decision in this matter: firstly, in a text entitled ‘Questions and Answers about Adoption,

Part I' he would speak disparagingly of "what everybody from the street knows," and what "the majority (or masses, *zhong*) can comprehend,"⁸⁶⁰ who with their straightforward, categorical answer to the problem at hand had missed the point of the careful and nuanced stipulations of classic text and commentarial exegesis. Secondly, in a preface from the Shenzong era to another text about *puyi*, Ouyang Xiu would state in the strongest terms that the majority was not always right, and that at times it was only posterity that could decide who was right and who was not, despite the fact that that would seem obvious under normal circumstances. His historical example for this claim was the story of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, whose correct normative judgment had also been ignored by the majority in their own time, and was only recognized as recommendable several hundred years after their demise. In this way, he likens his and Han Qi's role in the debate to that of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, who had resisted what seemed to be the public opinion of their time, and became models of upright behavior as a consequence.⁸⁶¹ It cannot be excluded that he had somewhat changed his mind about the uses of the public sphere after realizing that opinion was against him at this point, yet, on second glance what he says here is still compatible with his old contention that public procedures and the information that the public sphere provided helped to make the right decision, but did not make it in and by itself, it merely is putting a different emphasis on the question, again acting like a lawyer who argues his case depending on the situation that he faces, which had changed dramatically from what it had been in *qingli*.

⁸⁶⁰ 為後或問上. QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, p. 86.

⁸⁶¹ 濮議序. QSW. vol. 34, j. 717, p. 74-75.

Returning to Sima Guang's memorial, we see him continue his refutation of the argument offered by the chancellors:

I humbly observe that previously there was an order for the body of officials to discuss the proper ceremonial form to be implemented for the Prince of Pu. The Hanlin scholar Wang Gui and more than twenty others, all have offered the opinion that one should abide by the precedent of the previous reign and confer and grant a one-year mourning period appropriate for an older relative, on both occasions that this discussion took place, there was not one man who said something different. [The reason] why they considered this the correct choice, was nothing but the desire to attend to the Prince of Pu with ritual, and to aid Your Majesty in your righteousness.

However, it was the will of the central government to alone be keen on honoring the Prince of Pu as 'august deceased father', cleverly distorting the language, misleading and confusing Your Majesty, ignoring the solemn ceremonies of the former kings, disregarding the public opinion of all under heaven. As a consequence of this, the imperial clansmen and collateral relatives have already received their fiefs and grants, and only the ritual ceremony of worshipping the Prince of Pu to this day has not been carried out. This is why the majority of people are anxious and depressed, and what prevents them from becoming satisfied and pleased.

Some fear that Your Majesty so far was unable to decide and know which of the two suggestions is right and which is wrong, so I ask to again [be allowed] to explain it in detail for Your Majesty. The central government claims that the Yili, the text of the orders, as well as the *Wufu nianyue* edict, all state: someone adopted by another man sacrifices in mourning to his [own] parents', taking that [to mean] that the son who has been adopted addresses both the one who adopted him, as well as his biological parents as 'father and mother'. In my investigation, for ritual regulations one cannot but put the explanation of things in written form, so that people comprehend it. If in an order one wants to say that someone who has been adopted as another one's descendent, offers [mourning] sacrifices to his [natural] father and mother, if one were not to call them 'father and mother', I do not know how to put this in writing [in any other way]. In this way then is the government deceiving all the people of the realm, saying that they all are ignorant of the principles of language.⁸⁶²

The fact that the text talks of 'father and mother' should not lead one to read any normative meaning into it, since it was merely the principles and needs of comprehensible language, which made it impossible to use any other term here. Yet, in some way that was Han Qi's earlier point, namely that the mere language, the *wen* of the classic text in and of itself already contained a normative message.

Sima Guang goes on to refute the chancellor's historical references as irrelevant for the case at hand, because both Xuandi's and Guangwu's use of *huangkao* took place in a different situation; the former's use of the title for his father did not infringe on the rights of the previous emperor,

⁸⁶² CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4975. Fan Zhen offers a similar argument: *Songchen zhuchen zouyi*. vol. 2, j. 89, p. 961.

since in the generational hierarchy he was like a grandson of the former emperor, but accordingly Xuandi still refrained from elevating his own grandfather to a position that would infringe on his predecessor's status. The latter was in fact the founding emperor of the Later Han, earning him the right to honor his own ancestors, which he however still did in a modest way.

This leads us to the crux of the matter:

In this case, Your Majesty [by Renzong] personally was made the son of Renzong, in order to inherit the throne, and the *Zuozhuan* says: a country cannot have two rulers, a family cannot have two fathers.' If one additionally honors the Prince of Pu as 'august deceased father', then where would that leave Renzong? If the government is of the opinion that for the 'second emperor' one does not bestow imperial titles on his father and grandfather, citing that as the law, then that is indeed correct. If they [at the same time] say that the title of 'august deceased father' can be implemented in the current situation, then this does not match [their own] logic of things. Let's assume that Renzong were still alive and ruling all under heaven, and Prince Pu were also still among the living. At that time, if Your Majesty were to be decreed a prince, then would it not be clear whether Prince Pu would be called 'father', or 'uncle'? If it is the case that if the former emperor were still alive [Prince Pu] would be called uncle (as indeed he was in a way, for Renzong had called Prince Pu 'august older brother', *huangxiong*, in this edict installing Yingzong as heir),⁸⁶³ and when he is dead then [Prince Pu] is called father, then I conclude that Your Majesty must not go through with this action. When talking about it from this background, what doubt can there still be that the Prince of Pu should be called 'august uncle'?⁸⁶⁴

Above, Sima Guang had denied the validity of the argument that the use of 'father and mother' had any meaning beyond the need of the text to be clear to its readers; here, however, he draws on a very similar point. Indeed, Renzong had addressed Prince Pu as 'august elder brother' in his edict installing Yingzong as heir. However, how else than as older brother should Renzong address the Prince of Pu when decreeing that *his son* was to become his heir, and did that really solve Yingzong's problem of how to address his father?⁸⁶⁵ The point is that following this

⁸⁶³ CB. vol. 8, j. 197, p. 4773.

⁸⁶⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4976.

⁸⁶⁵ Note that Ouyang Xiu appears to have replied to that in another text about the topic, 'Answers to questions about *puyi*': *The questioner asked: to address the Prince of Pu as parent, how does that fit the intention of Renzong? I answered: alas, Emperor Renzong was of such perfect sagehood, and perfect enlightenment! He knew that establishing an adopted heir was a public affair, and was not afraid that people would know, and therefore did not conceal it. Therefore he issued a clear command to the realm, saying: 'this is the son of the Prince of Pu.'* It follows that [Renzong] did not mind [people] to know that the prince of Pu was the biological father. This is what Renzong before has announced to the realm, it is what I called 'simple and easy to understand, not wanton, not clandestine, not deceiving, and not hypocritical, it is the model of the sages.' (漢議答問. QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, p. 84).

argument still presupposes that the ritual hierarchy was entirely defined by the adopted father, and did not allow the adopted son to have any parental relationship with his own parents, but this is precisely what was disputed by the ‘government’. While Prince Pu was dead and the mourning for him had ended when Yingzong was officially declared a prince, at the very beginning of the process of his elevation, Zongshi, as he was called then, had asked to complete his mourning for his father, and had been allowed to do so by the emperor, if only after some reluctance.⁸⁶⁶ In other words, it would seem that even when Renzong was alive, some form of personal relationship to his father had been accepted, however reluctantly, and had not met the criticism of Sima Guang, who after all had been involved in the adoption process.⁸⁶⁷

Finally, Sima Guang comes back to the question of sincerity, for the simple question of who was profiting from the position that he held in the debate should help the emperor to decide who was sincere and who was not:

Now of the ministers that attend court, unless they are hampered by [their own] treacherous mind, those who want to join forces with the government to mislead and perplex Your Majesty, all know that calling the Prince of Pu ‘august deceased father’ is not acceptable. Moreover, what the desire of the majority is also can be known. Why does the emperor not investigate the disposition of officialdom? Among officials, who would not know that the Prince of Pu by nature is most closely related to Your Majesty? If they were to cater to the wishes of a superior and pander [to Your Majesty], ignore ritual and righteousness, [and were suggesting to] have excessive veneration [for the Prince of Pu], how could that not bring advantages for oneself and dispel all worries [for one’s career]? The reason for me sticking to this suggestion, is none other than that I do not want for Your Majesty to lose the hearts and minds of all the realm, and to suffer the slander of ten-thousand generations. When looking at it from this perspective, it is very easy to see whether officials are loyal or flatterers, evil or upright. I wish for the emperor to study the canons of antiquity above, and below to accord with the desire of the majority, and for the ritual to worship the Prince of Pu, you should go with the suggestion made by Wang Gui et al. This is also something that would bring harmony to heaven and men. I am awaiting your decision.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁶ CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4729.

⁸⁶⁷ Sima Guang instead had lauded the prince, not for his filiality towards his biological father, but for his persistent deferrals, some of which were due to the mourning for his father (CB. vol. 8, j. 1907, p. 4776).

⁸⁶⁸ CB. vol. 8, j. 205, p. 4976.

Sima Guang in the above memorial repeated and emphasized the earlier claim that ritual in this case was indivisible, and non-negotiable, and in this way offered what we have called a sincere interpretation of ritual, one that exclusively sees it as a function of a different, more important and more general norm. Without ever calling it *cheng*, sincere, he at the same time tried to help the emperor recognize those officials who participated in the debate in a sincere fashion, and those who did so for their personal gain, in other words, how to know if inner and outer state of his officials were in congruence with each other. Elsewhere Sima Guang also would more explicitly call what he wanted the emperor himself to do ‘sincerity’: on the occasion of torrential rains in 8/1065, he demanded that the emperor apply himself to three current problems with utmost sincerity, *zhicheng* 至誠 (treating the dowager and the princesses, ministers usurping power, impartial decision-making), and while others were more direct in connecting the natural phenomena to the ritual question that was still undecided, the thrust of his memorial was readily apparent, for solving these three problems implicitly also would lead to the ‘right’ decision in the *puyi* question.⁸⁶⁹

Needless to say that the chancellors met with no success in 1/1066, when they attempted to end the discussion for good by once more providing in detail their arguments against the censors and *liang zhi*, also regarding the significance of the recent catastrophes in the debate. Much of the argument made by Han Qi et al. here will be repeated in later writings by Ouyang Xiu that will be discussed below, therefore it will be sufficient here to point to the three different arguments of

⁸⁶⁹ CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 4985-4989. Memorial by Lü Hui making a direct connection of *puyi* to the phenomena: CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 4989-90. Note also the aforementioned exam question, which also drew a connection to natural phenomena, and assured the emperor that “sentiments can be quelled (*sha* 殺), but ritual cannot be bestowed, parental kindness (*en*) can be cut off, but righteousness (*yi*) is irreducible.” The person in question earlier supposedly had been lauded for his *wen* by Ouyang Xiu (CB. vol. 8, j. 206, p. 4998-5000).

the opposition that they refute: the address ‘august uncle’ had no precedent in either classics or history; it was plainly slanderous to connect a current catastrophe to a decision that had not been finalized at that point, and therefore could not have any consequences yet; finally, their detractors were abbreviating the historical facts about the Han precedents that they invoked against the term *huangkao* in a way to fit their argument, since the problem back then had not been the address itself, but the subsequent building of ancestral temples in the capital, and thus in a position that indeed interfered with the main line of succession. However, such manifest infringement on Renzong’s ritual position had never been their intention or suggestion. The memorial ends with the exasperated statement that when the opposition knew all this, and still insisted on the appellation ‘august uncle’, then “even if Kongzi and Mengzi would rise from death, they would be unable to explain it to them.”⁸⁷⁰

The second step in their attempt to end the crisis was the compromise they brokered between the sovereigns, the ritual nature of which we have already described, which both constituted a negotiation of the ritual itself, and the way it was brought about. The back and forth of edicts between the empress dowager and the emperor did not contain much of an additional argument, and merely stated the compromise, namely that the empress dowager granted the title *huang* and *hou*, that is, Imperial Majesty and Empress, to the Prince of Pu and his wives, and the address *qin* to his father. Yingzong declined the titles, and only accepted the address father; in addition, he announced the building of a temple at the gravesite, that is, not in the vicinity of the ancestral temples in the capital, and its redesignation as an official graveyard.⁸⁷¹ During the process of the

⁸⁷⁰ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5025-29.

⁸⁷¹ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5030.

back and forth, it would seem that rumors about the imminent decision in favor of the designation *huang* spread, which led Sima Guang to write the following memorial to reiterate with more urgency that there could be no compromise for him:

On ‘His Majesty’ Anyi (Prince Pu)

I heard it in all the streets and alleys, and do not yet know if it is credible or not; the word is that the court wants to bestow the posthumous honor of Imperial Majesty of Anyi to the Prince of Pu. If this is actually the case, I humbly fear that it is unacceptable. Your Majesty has already become the adopted heir of Renzong, in ritual terms you cannot as well attend to a relative close to you. Previously I have already talked about that exhaustively, I don’t dare to again bother Your Majesty’s attention with it. Presently I do not know what the intentions of Your Majesty are [in all of this], but by firmly wanting to honor the Prince of Pu posthumously, do you intend to enhance your honor or to accrue a personal gain? Or is it that you assume that it is beneficial for the Prince of Pu?

In previous times, the habit of rulers coming into the succession from a collateral branch and posthumously honoring their father with ‘imperial majesty’, had its origin with Emperor Aidi of Han. Afterwards, Emperor Andi, Huandi, and Lingdi also did that. Aidi posthumously honored his father Dingtao Prince of Gong as Gong Emperor. If one today honors the Anyi Prince of Pu as Imperial Majesty of Anyi, then this exactly uses the model of Aidi. Your Majesty has Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang at your disposal, but does not take them as his model, and models himself after an oafish ruler of the Han Dynasty, how is that suitable to do you honor? The infinite kindness of Renzong is [still] with the people, it has indeed seeped into the very marrow of their bones, the reason why the hearts and minds of all between the seas pay homage and pledge themselves to Your Majesty, is because you received the order to become Renzong’s son from himself personally. Today, after you succeeded to the realm, Your Majesty then confers an imperial honorific title to the Prince of Pu, when this becomes known in the realm, how would it not disintegrate? So how can this still be suitable to bring about personal gain?⁸⁷²

This passage purports to counter all the possible ways that this suggestion could be in the interest of the emperor himself, because adopting it would neither promote his own glory, nor make his rule secure in any way. Sima Guang then acknowledged that there was a place to remember the Prince of Pu and his kindness towards the emperor, but it was not the public way of providing him with an empty title that was fundamentally unritual. So in fact, remembering his father in Sima Guang’s view was best done by adhering to the proper ritual for Renzong:

As to the kindness of being conceived and raised, it is too vast to be requited, who could forget that? Your Majesty not forgetting the parental kindness of the Prince of Pu exists inside Your Majesty’s heart, not in this outward adornment and empty title. The filial son loves his parent, and therefore sacrifices him by means of ritual. If today one bestows an un-ritual, empty title on the Prince of Pu, and worships him, then what good does that actually do for the Prince of Pu? Of all these three [motives for such action] there is not one that would be suitable [to achieve its goal], so Your Majesty implementing it, with all due respect leaves me perplexed about it. Therefore this cannot but have been [brought about by] one or two ministers of the government, who because of the mistaken nature of a previous suggestion, which already had drawn heavy criticism from all under heaven, subsequently wished to dress

⁸⁷² CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5030-31. 論安懿皇劄子. QSW. vol. 55, j. 1192, p. 70-71.

up their faults and gloss over their shortcomings, paying no attention to the fact that Your Majesty's virtue is depleted in this way. If Your Majesty heeds and listens to this, then with all due respect I take that as a mistake.⁸⁷³

Here, Sima Guang acknowledges that Yingzong's feelings for his father are legitimate in principle, but at the same time rejects the multivalent, the subjunctive *qingli* reading of ritual as mitigating contradicting, legitimate sentiments. He denies that the empty title, devoid of the larger normative meaning in the dynastic context, could have any benefit for his natural father or for Yingzong himself. All political cynicism and machinations aside, which we have talked about at length in the previous chapter, it seems also plausible to come to the conclusion that Sima Guang simply failed to understand how ritual could have any other than the normative function in support of dynastic legitimacy that he ascribes to it, particularly in a situation like this, when the legitimacy of the succession was already in doubt. In the end, what caused the divergence of opinion must be a combination of self-deception, and bad people who deceived the ruler for their own personal benefit, marking the unequivocal break with his erstwhile political allies. Even the compromise brokered by the chancellery was unacceptable, because it still only dressed up what was fundamentally wrong:

I also have heard about a plan of the government, they wish to draw on a handwritten order from the empress dowager as a pretext, in the end not calling him '[august] deceased father' but 'father' (*qin* 親). But even if they dress it up again and again in so many ways, in a nutshell, it will lead to betraying the kindness of the previous emperor, depleting Your Majesty's righteousness, disobeying the ritual [stipulations] of the sages, and losing the hearts and minds of all between the four seas. The ministers of the government only can deceive themselves, but how can they deceive Heaven on High, or the people of the realm? I wish that Your Majesty would quickly abandon this idea, do not let the rumor spread to everywhere, then the realm would be very fortunate indeed. Although at present I am not a censor any more, but in the past I have already memorialized [about this issue], I serve as a close courtier, when I come across a major transgression of the state, I do not dare not to speak out.⁸⁷⁴

In this way, the positions are finally exposed as completely incompatible, since it is precisely the fact that the chancellors, amid compromising on other positions, insisted on an appellation that

⁸⁷³ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5031.

⁸⁷⁴ CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5031.

contained the meaning ‘father’ that the opposition declined to accept. Soon, the mainstay of the debate would shift from the original question to the problem of censorial rights and immunity from punishment for this important tool of good government. All things told, given the story of the adoption, the present state of public opinion, and the legitimacy of Yingzong’s rule, there was only one solution that was acceptable for Sima Guang, and that was to adopt the suggestion that he had made wholesale. We see that his contribution to the debate indeed already had many of the characteristics of the argument he would make in the larger clash that would follow in Shenzong’s reign, asserting that the problem must be a misguided emperor and self-deceiving ministers, and offering the same solution that he would offer later too: complete subjection of the emperor and his chancellors to what he considered the norm to be applied. While the form of the political maneuvers that the censors and Sima Guang used here was quite similar to what had been done by the *qingli* good men earlier, particularly in the 1030s, their political behavior and the content of the *qingli* demands itself never had been this radical and unequivocal.

The remainder of this chapter will be taken up by a selection from various texts that Ouyang Xiu wrote after the fact, and in which he explained in detail what his position was and why the arguments of the opposition for a more radical solution were wrong from both an exegetical and normative perspective. What makes this worth quoting at length is the fact that it exhibits Ouyang Xiu’s hermeneutics, the negotiation between different normative demands that he deems necessary to achieve the best result in this matter, and thus highlights the difference to how Sima Guang argued for his case. Moreover, the censor’s argument so far has received more coverage in the literature.

Questions about Adoption, Part I

Someone asked: ‘Someone who is adopted as the heir of someone else, does not cut off the parents that have given birth to him, is that acceptable?’ Reply: ‘It is acceptable indeed! The people of antiquity did not cut [them] off, but reduced [the mourning period] for them to a secondary place.’ ‘How do we know that?’ Reply: ‘We see it in the classics. Question: ‘What do you mean by ‘reducing [the mourning period] for them, but not cutting them off?’’ ‘Reducing the mourning for them serves to not cut them off, if one were to cut them off, then there would be no need to reduce [the mourning]. What is meant by reducing but not cutting them off, in terms of ritual, is that it is proper for the adoptee to reduce the three-year mourning period [ordinarily called for to mourn] his birth parents to a one-year second-degree mourning, while not changing their address “father and mother”.’

[...The sages by phrasing their stipulations about the relationship to his new and old family in such a nuanced way made clear that the natural parents should not be cut off...]. [The status] as a parent cannot be reduced, ‘reducing’ only means reducing the outside trappings, that is, the mourning [ritual]. The reason why it must be reduced, is to show that a concession has been made; because he accepts the important responsibility of carrying on the main line, he reveres [its] ancestors and makes a concession to them, making a concession to them finds its expression in the [reduced mourning] to the other [parents].

For life, there is nothing more important than the [birth] parents, and the fact that one makes a concession to the [adopted parents] serves to show that carrying on the main [adopted] line is also important. It serves to encourage the adopted heir, knowing that the important task of carrying on [the line] is a matter that is exclusively a [social] responsibility among humans. This is something stipulated by righteousness. However, the *dao* of father and son is of a kind [endowed] by heaven. Seeing it from the vantage point of the grander [scheme of] righteousness, it is an option to reduce its outside trappings, but when grounding it in utmost humaneness, then one cannot cut off what is endowed by heaven. To cut off the *dao* of a man and to extinguish a heavenly principle, this is something that perhaps even one who is not humane would not do. Therefore the sages devoting themselves to stipulating mourning rituals, implemented a reduction of the three-year mourning period for parents, so that it became a one-year period, did not extinguish the name of “father and mother”, and made that manifest in the classics, which say ‘someone adopted by somebody else, sacrifices [in mourning] to his [natural] parents.’ This serves to show that the mourning period can be reduced, but the name of father and mother cannot be extinguished. This is what I mean by ‘reducing but not cutting off,’ it serves to preserve humaneness.’⁸⁷⁵

Ouyang Xiu here clearly lays out how in his view both the interests of the adopted son to pay respect to his birth parents, and those of the adopted parents are legitimate, and need to be addressed in an appropriate way that gives both their due. This was only possible if both sides of this complex ethical situation found their reflection in the ritual solution, exemplified by the duality of norms, in this case, righteousness and humaneness, which had to be considered.

⁸⁷⁵ 為後或問上. QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, p. 85-86.

In fact, we can see in the classics and the commentaries what the solution was to this kind of problem, as the following passage from the text claims, which also addressed the assertion by Sima Guang that the majority (*zhong*) actually had the best sense for the correct handling of the question, by pitting a sort of normative elitism against it and equating *zhong* with commoner.

[The claim] is that there are things that one cannot get both [at the same time], and that there are some demands that one cannot satisfy both [at the same time], [that is, that] when acting as a son for this one, one then cannot act as a son for the other one. This is something that everyone from the streets and alleys knows, therefore their saying goes: ‘one who is adopted by someone else as an heir becomes his son.’ This categorical statement is not the statement of the sages, it is the explanation of the Han Confucians, and goes as far as what the common people [*zhong*] can comprehend, but when perusing the various ritual [classics, then this turns out] not to be true. When Zi Xia was going to write the commentary on the Sangfu, if it was going to be the categorical statement of the people, then he would not have needed many words, and straightforward in one sentence would have said: ‘the one who is the adopted son of somebody else becomes his son,’ and therefore one as a matter of course would have considered his parents to be cut off as if they never had born him, and [also] as a matter of course would have solely considered the adoptive father as [reference point] for the ritual and relationship status. [...] [Instead,] his stipulations [about the family relationships through the adopted father] are very detailed. Only for the [natural] father and mother that bore him this is not true, and he separately stipulates a mourning period [for them], saying ‘he sacrifices [in mourning] to his parents.’ [...] This means that [if one were] to adopt one’s position as a real son of the adopted father wholesale, and consequently consider those who gave birth to oneself as if they had never done so, the extent of this cutting off would be too much! This is something that human sentiment could not bear [to do], and something that the sage also would not do. [...] This all shows that [what the opposition says] is supported neither by the classic, nor by what Zi Xia has so painstakingly differentiated, and moreover one is cruel enough to enact something that human sentiment cannot bear, I do not know what precedent this is based on. [Supposedly] this is [the perspective] of the grand [scheme] of righteousness, while not drawing on the ritual classics, and implementing an explanation without precedent [or source]. Is that acceptable? No it is not!⁸⁷⁶

The heart of the matter is that it would be cruel to demand of someone to cut off his own birth parents in this way, since that goes against human sentiment. Again it is worth remembering the background in this specific case: Yingzong had been taken against his will from his environment, and put in a place that he had no intention to be in, which had led to the current ethical crisis with the empress dowager. Now, to remedy the situation and safeguard their own project, Sima Guang and the other memorialists demanded of Yingzong that he sincerely apply himself to paying

⁸⁷⁶ 為後或問上. QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, p. 86-87.

respect to the dowager, without any outward reference to the sentiments for his birth father he had mourned for as an adult.⁸⁷⁷

Having provided his exegetical reasoning, he went on to explain his point from a more general normative perspective, taking up an argument that he had made as early as ‘On Fundamentals’, when he had stated already what ritual should do with respect to human sentiments, while also referring to, and elaborating on a similar duality of terms as we have seen at work with Fan Zhongyan as well:

Questions about Adoption, Part 2

The questioner asked: ‘the son cannot cut off the one who gave him life, one can see that in the classics, in the *Tongli*, in the chart of the *Wufu*, in the laws, in the orders, the textual [references] therefore are clear. What is the intention why they do not cut off [the natural parents]?’ Reply: ‘a sage is someone who takes into account human sentiments when creating rituals.’

The questioner asked: ‘there are things which one cannot get both [at the same time], and there are some demands that one cannot satisfy both [at the same time], [that is,] when acting as a son for this one, then one cannot act as a son for the other one, how does that go against human sentiment?’ I said: ‘this is the talk of the majority of the common people, those who do not know benevolence and righteousness. The sage in handling human sentiments, exclusively grounds that on humaneness and righteousness, therefore he can get both and satisfy both. This is why he is different from the common people and what makes him a sage, this is what one values in the sage and makes a model for the common people. The *dao* of father and son is [pre-]determined, it is what is called the utmost of what is endowed by heaven, and the *dao* of humaneness. Being an adopted son is expedient, what is expedient and born of necessity is an institution [guided by] righteousness. Of kindness there is none more important than [the kindness] of

⁸⁷⁷ Ouyang Xiu here also discusses more recent ritual stipulations, and how they would reflect the same principle, despite what people say (QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, p. 87): *The questioner asked: ‘the people of antiquity all did not cut off the one they were born to, but why is that not the case for the people today?’ I said: ‘how can you say that? This is also true for the people today, and they even add to what the ancients [did]. Today the ‘Ritual of the Kaibao Period’ and the chart of the ‘Five Mourning Relationships’ (Wufu), that is, the ritual stipulations of the state, all say, “someone who is adopted observes a reduced mourning period for his biological parents,” although the mourning is reduced, it must be a proper mourning [for parents], showing that the way of father and mother is at work. “For the adoptive parent he observes a full three year mourning period [as for a father],” and although the mourning is more grave, it necessarily is a mourning for persons of no relation, showing that it has been dictated by righteousness. And the text of the laws and commands also is the same as that in Wufu, all do not change the name of their father and mother, comparing it with the classics it all matches, there is nothing left out or different. However, the chart of the Wufu in addition adds a mourning period ‘in one’s heart’ of three years, [that is, without outward expression], that means that three years are the mourning for parents, and although for the sake of the adoptive father one reduces the mourning that is [visible outside on] the body, it still calls on the son to perform the mourning for father and mother in his heart, showing that one cannot cut off in one’s heart the kindness of having been given life. Therefore the rituals that people today perform, in comparison to the people of antiquity still make some addition, how can one say that this is not true for the people today?’*

giving life, in terms of righteousness there is nothing more important than the one [owed to] the adopted parent, these two things, humaneness and righteousness, as a rule are employed supporting each other, and never harm each other.'

Therefore, [although] of human sentiments there are none deeper than towards one's natural parents, [yet] one restrains oneself and reduces its outward (material) manifestation, constrained by the grand righteousness; the fact that it is reduced but not cut off in one's heart, preserves utmost humaneness. Restrain oneself and reduce it, then humaneness does not infringe on righteousness; reduce it without cutting it off, and righteousness does not harm humaneness. This is how the sage can make use of humaneness and righteousness to support each other. That is what the majority of commoners consider false, they say about it that 'one cannot get both', affirming that if there is humaneness then there is no righteousness, and if there is righteousness then there is no humaneness. Can that really be true for what is called benevolence and righteousness? Therefore I say that the ones who do not know about humaneness and righteousness are the common people. Alas, the sages drawing on human sentiments to create ritual, did so by adapting it and fitting it to their disposition, and giving them (the sentiments) a regulated, [cohesive] form (*jiewen*). Nothing was done that would be forced on them, nothing was done that would go against [the grain], in the event that one wanted to turn that on its head and change it, can this be achieved? Now it is said that the one who is adopted by someone else must cut off the love that gave life to him, far more than forcing something on him that is difficult, and going against his wishes, this straightforwardly wants him to go against his heavenly endowed disposition and change it, saying 'what you are close to is cut off by us, change the fact that you are close to the other [parents], and solely become close to these [adopted parents]', is this something that one can be forced [to do]?⁸⁷⁸

In this way we have come full circle from the visions of ritual that we have discussed at the beginning of Part I, namely that ritual, when handled and instituted correctly, had the potential to give contradicting human sentiments and normative demands a cohesive form. We have argued for a strong connection between this view of *li* and what Seligman et al. described as the ritual subjunctive, a contention that here is corroborated further, for what follows in its essence is the argument that Seligman et al. made later: Ouyang Xiu here argued for taking ritual on its own terms and as a separate normative endeavor, for if one entirely subjected it to another, unchanging norm in the name of normative coherence (sincerity), the result invariably was its opposite, hypocrisy:

As a matter of fact, father and mother are much like heaven and earth, there is nothing to surpass their great kindness and utmost love that stems from them giving life to us. Today if one assumes that on account of being adopted, one suddenly on the contrary [ought to] consider them as if they had never given life to us, then the severity of this cutting off goes far too far. Either one forces them to truly cut them off, then this is going against human sentiments; or one is severing them on the grounds of righteousness, then this kind of humaneness and righteousness teaches people to act hypocritically. Therefore the sage knows that not one of these two is possible. This is to say that to emphasize the importance of the person one is the heir to does not infringe on humaneness, and in a restrained way allowing oneself to express this kindness [of the birth-parents] does not infringe on righteousness, and moreover

⁸⁷⁸ 為後或問下. QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, p. 87-88.

completes one's heavenly endowed nature and prevents one from being caught up in hypocrisy, [when] only reducing and not cutting off, then there is nothing that is impossible, one can say that all complexity is unified. As a matter of fact only [the duality of] humaneness and righteousness has the potential to unify the [complexity] of human sentiments, and is suitable to maintain man's heavenly endowed disposition, it serves as remedy in the affairs of men, there is nothing that is impossible. Therefore a view that acknowledges that based on righteousness one can adopt an heir, but does not acknowledge that due to humaneness one cannot cut off his parents, is the hard-headed opinion of the common people [majority]. Knowing that humaneness and righteousness are implemented together in order to unify/cover the complexity of human sentiments, [and knowing that this duality of humaneness and righteousness] is suitable to maintain the heavenly endowed disposition of men, preventing [people] from entering into acts of hypocrisy, only those who are well versed in ritual can deduct the profound intention of the sage.

The questioner asked: 'for someone who was adopted and came to rule all under heaven, to not cut off the ones who gave birth to him, leads to interference with the legitimate [main] line of succession, what about that?' I said: 'if reduced it cannot interfere. From the Han Dynasty, among those who were adopted and came to rule all under heaven, [cases of] revering his birth parents were many, when has that ever interfered with the legitimate line of succession? Had Han Xuandi and Aidi not established an ancestral temple in the capital, thereby [indeed] throwing into disorder the hierarchy of the imperial ancestral halls, then how would they still have interfered with the legitimate line of succession?'⁸⁷⁹

Rather than leading to the sincerity that the opposition demanded of the emperor, forcing Yingzong to forego expressing his sentiment towards his natural father would only lead to falsehood and hypocrisy, and as such go against everything that the sages intended to achieve. However, rather than just speaking to Ouyang Xiu's different take on ritual, this passage by the same token also makes a different argument about how to be sincere, again coming full circle from what we had said about the *qingli* project, which always had been about more sincerity. Once again, *puyi* was an ethical question after all, meant to help a new emperor to find and fulfill his social and governmental role, after a difficult succession and first years on the throne.

However, despite having their origin in the same movement, as we have argued earlier, the ideas on how to fulfill this role, on how to be sincere that Sima Guang and Ouyang Xiu expressed here, could not have been much more different: Sima Guang argued that Yingzong's sentiments, while legitimate, had no bearing on how he should act in public, instead he should sincerely and exclusively apply himself to his role as ruler and successor to the throne, and it is this unification

⁸⁷⁹ QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, p. 88-89.

of – itself unified – inner state (as opposed to sentiments) and – unified – outer act that would solve the ethical problem at hand. Ouyang Xiu on the other hand claimed that such an act was not going to achieve its goal, and instead would lead to its exact opposite; only a solution that fully recognized and expressed the complexity of the normative situation of an adoption, and gave each norm its due would be able to both preserve Yingzong’s human nature and still reflect the interest of the state in legitimizing its current ruler through his worship of the previous one. We have argued that in *qingli*, this attitude, in spite of all the exclusive rhetoric, had led to a relatively balanced political approach, and to social relationships that were much more inclusive than the rhetoric suggests, including the possibility to reach out to one’s enemies. Soon after *puyi* it transpired that their political and normative disagreement once again did not keep Ouyang Xiu from resuming social ritual with some opponents in the debate, writing a recommendation for Sima Guang that lauded him, aside from his general talents, for his pivotal role in bringing about the succession of Yingzong, and congratulating Lü Gongzhu on his promotion;⁸⁸⁰ we see a rather considerable degree of continuity in terms of what we have termed social ritual as well. As we shall see shortly, this ritual was still selective, and the respect implicit in it did not extend to all the enemies. However, even as a statement, without ‘meaning it’, or the expectation that it would be reciprocated, this behavior of Ouyang Xiu is remarkable as such so shortly after the dispute.

⁸⁸⁰ QSW. vol. 32, j. 690, p. 303 (1067). 與開封知府呂公著啓. QSW. vol. 33, j. 703, p. 164 (1068/4).

Subsequent events would suggest that neither the opponents in general, nor Sima Guang in particular reciprocated Ouyang Xiu's respect and overtures.⁸⁸¹ Firstly, after the resignation of Ouyang Xiu in 3/1067 had heralded the political victory of his opponents, his normative vision also would be publicly revoked: in a rather programmatic exchange with the new vice chancellor Wu Kui, Shenzong openly agreed with Kui's verdict that the decision about the ritual stipulations for Prince Pu had been a mistake, and had indeed been motivated by personal favoritism (*si en*). Moreover, Shenzong explicitly stated that this had been Ouyang Xiu's mistake, to which Wu Kui responded by pointing to Han Qi's role in it, and the fact that he, Kui, had been recommended by Han Qi numerous times, again indicating the social connections between both 'factions'. Finally, Wu Kui on this occasion also all but proclaimed the victory of Sima Guang's brand of sincerity, when he impressed on Shenzong to respond to heaven by being in accord with the hearts and minds of the people. Wu Kui promised that if Shenzong was moving subjects (*gewu* 格物) with utmost sincerity, there would be no subject that would not respond in kind, with utmost sincerity towards him as well.⁸⁸²

The second hint regarding the attitude of the *puyi* opposition towards Ouyang Xiu comes directly from Sima Guang, and it shows once more Sima Guang's exclusive attitude. In 1073, Sima

⁸⁸¹ Already during the debate, Sima Guang had criticized how harsh the censors had been treated, and how lightly he himself had come off, rejecting the double standard that seemed to be behind this difference, making clear that he was on their side (CB. vol. 8, j. 207, p. 5041). Once again, however, the case is not as clear cut as one wishes it to be, for Sima Guang did write a mourning note on occasion of the death of Han Qi in 1075 (祭韓忠獻魏公文. QSW. vol. 56, j. 1230, p. 335-336). However, I would argue that the note and its content in a certain way still proves my point, for at this time they were politically on the same side, and accordingly Sima Guang would laud Han Qi for his resistance against Wang Anshi, and his role in settling Yingzong's succession. Together with the Han's military pursuits, which he lauds, as well as the role of Han Qi in *qingli*, all of these are 'real' things that they had in common and that he could laud in sincerity. This makes this text different from the one that Fan Zhongyan wrote for Lü Yijian, which was much more ambiguous and general in its praise.

⁸⁸² CB. vol. 9, j. 209, p. 5082-83. Promotions for Sima Guang and Lü Gongzhu in intercal. 3/1067 (p. 5088). Talk about promoting Wang Anshi, Han Wei speaks for Wang Anshi (p. 5086-87).

Guang wrote a preface for the collected memorials of his late comrade-in-arms against the chancellor's suggestions, Lü Hui, and started his introduction by quoting a piece by Ouyang Xiu about the importance of censors, who after all would be judged by 'good men' of coming centuries; he mentioned the fact that Lü had been ousted by high ministers and declared that this collection of memorials would serve to record what Lü Hui had said, and thereby preserve his heart-mind for a long time, despite his physical demise. In other words, Sima Guang, as *Shao shi wenjian houlu* alleges, implicitly was accusing Ouyang Xiu of hypocrisy as well, of lauding the importance of the censors and then ousting Lü Hui against his better judgment, and the views he had expressed earlier.⁸⁸³ According to *Shao shi wenjian houlu*, Ouyang Xiu late in his life wrote another text about *puyi* to set the record straight and vent his criticism of Lü Hui's role in the debate, a text that he prefaced in the following way, likening himself to such sages as Bo Yi and Shu Qi, who had remained unrecognized at their time:

Bowing my head and [awaiting] the death penalty I speak: I have heard that among matters as a rule there are some which are hard to appraise [correctly] at a given time, and for which [one therefore] needs to wait for later generations [for such appraisal], Bo Yi and Shu Qi are a case in point. As to extreme [cases] concerning the righteousness between ruler and minister, and the way of father and son, the fact that the minister may not cut down his ruler, and the son may not cut off ties with his father, these are things that are very easy to understand. But at the time when King Wu started to act [to found the Zhou], people all thought that a ruler could be cut down; as to the beginning of the discussion about the Prince of Pu, people all thought that a father could be cut off, this is something that is very surprising and shocking. At the meeting in Mengjin, feudal lords who came without being summoned were from over 800 states, and these people representing the whole world all thought that it was permissible to cut down the ruler. Bo Yi and Shu Qi, two vagrant ministers like weak, solitary bamboo stalks, drew on their extremely limited power, wanted to resist the people of the world, but their power was insufficient to succeed, and what they said did not receive any attention. The two masters said that if what they said was discarded, then the righteousness between ruler and minister was discarded, and the chaos of the later generations would never find an end, therefore together they made it their task to warn the world by way of their unsurpassed [good] conduct, and subsequently did not eat the grain of the Zhou and died of hunger at the foot of the Shouyang [mountain], but the world still did not recognize them at this time. More than 500 years later, it fell to Confucius to praise their humaneness, and from that time on the *Dao* of the two masters became obvious. That which allowed incompetent kings and weak rulers to become established in later generations, and [what prevented] ministers from cutting down their rulers [under these circumstances], is nothing else but the effort of these two masters. As to things that are very easy to understand, the

⁸⁸³ 呂獻可章奏集序. QSW. vol. 56, j. 1217, p. 108. *Wenjian houlu*. j. 16, p. 128-129.

two masters for its sake went through extreme hardship in this way, and still it took 500 years for a sage to come forth, and only then did it become clear.⁸⁸⁴

Here, he most directly refutes Sima Guang's claim that the majority was always right, and goes on to justify writing this text, for it served to record for later generations what happened particularly regarding the role of the censors in the dispute:

But as to the dispute over the cemetery for the Prince of Pu, can this be fought out within one day of wrangling with ordinary people? This is why I cannot but record this matter so as to display [the ins and outs to] later generations. At the time when the dispute about the Prince of Pu arose, the erudite and learned raised their brushes to make their argument, the censors stood up at court to dispute, the commoners gathered together to debate, and these people representing the whole world all thought that the [biological] father could be cut off, and there was also no Bo Yi and Shu Qi to resist them. Nevertheless, thanks to the intelligence, humaneness and piety of the ruler, he was not misled by the opinion of the many, and relying on the classics and thinking about ritual, he established a cemetery and erected a temple, not cutting off the kindness between a father and son, considering this a model for eternity, such was the clear-sightedness of the previous emperor. Today literati-officials who are well versed in ritual and righteousness, and in an assertive way have expressed their doubts (about the majority opinion), must be 18 or 19, and certainly one would not need to wait for Bo Yi and Shu Qi to starve to death, or for Confucius to be reborn, so that [the matter] would be appraised [correctly]. But what must be recorded is the slander and deception of the lesser people. Indeed, since the Han Dynasty, among those who debated matters, when has it been the case that one did not have different opinions? Moreover, in the debate about the cemetery of the Prince of Pu, it was all wise men among the erudite and learned of their time, who merely believed that for the ritual of adoption the common good practice had been abandoned for a long time; ultimately they did not see fit to thoroughly investigate its complexity, but the mistake in their unified opinion came from their lack of compassion, and was not able to take anything away from their [status as] worthy men. Only the three ministers charged with speaking out [that is, the censors], harboring [a grudge] because of a different matter, motivated by resentment, greatly slandered the court and made the emperor look bad, availing themselves of this rare opportunity [to turn this dispute into the commodity] that would buy them a reputation. But the people at the time did not fathom their true state of mind, and did not investigate their false accusations, and in unison declared them to be loyal, causing the considerations of the previous emperor to become muddled and unclear to later generations, this is my responsibility. I was able to assist in this affair, and know its details, therefore I cannot but narrate them.⁸⁸⁵

There are two points to take away from this preface: firstly, he does condemn some of the officials that opposed the chancellor's question in the strongest way, once again showing that the judgment of the *qingli* men could be divisive and inclusive, precisely because the censors supposedly had failed to act in good faith, read 'sincerely', and were merely angling for a reputation here. Secondly, while he insists on his opinion being the normatively correct one, and criticizes them as having no compassion with the situation of Yingzong, Ouyang Xiu still

⁸⁸⁴ 濮議序. QSW. vol. 34, j. 717, p. 74-75.

⁸⁸⁵ QSW. vol. 34, j. 717, p. 75.

acknowledges that most of the opposing officials had been sincere and acted in good faith in *puyi*; he purports that it still is not a problem for officials to have different opinions in a debate. It is the censors that had brought the affair to a dramatic showdown whose role in the events should be recorded, and which needed to be marked as culprits, rather than lauded as they were by others, so as to give later generations an accurate picture of the Yingzong's intentions. It cannot but be called ironic that Ouyang Xiu would accuse censors to merely seek to make a name, given that that was what the *qingli* 'good men' had tried to do, and been accused of, earlier. The first chapter of *Puyi* contains a detailed account of the events that were already covered, while the second, once again in the form of question and answer, provides some additional explanations, which are quite similar to what we have heard before, but in some respects expand on his earlier argument, and bring in points from other texts he wrote.⁸⁸⁶ The questioner pointed out that the suggestion of the opposition merely reflected the common practice among the population at this time, and that going back to the ancient stipulations all of a sudden might create difficulties; echoing 'On Fundamentals', Ouyang Xiu replied that:

The decline of ritual has been going on for a long time. It started with the common people of the alleys and villages who, not knowing ritual and righteousness, distorted them, and because the families of the elite clans then copied what they saw, it subsequently became common practice. But of course the ritual stipulations of the dynasty still exist. Today the capped and girdled officials, installed by [and at] the court, and given titles as ministers of Confucian erudition so as to discuss ritual and righteousness for the court, then do not want to abide by the ritual stipulations of the [sages and the] founders (this refers to the Kaibao Tongli, the Wufu nianyue and other books), and [instead] propagate the bad practices of the common people of the alleys, this is not something that I would dare to preside over [in my official functions]. In case I have committed an offence on account of this, then I certainly am not ashamed and do not regret. [...]

[Some insist that mentioning the natural father's name is only permissible in a ritual context, an injunction that Ouyang Xiu dismisses with some examples from the code of law. The questioner then asks why there is such a discrepancy between what the ritual texts stipulate and what the people do nowadays. Ouyang Xiu replied:] The sages considered adopting a son a public affair, they did not fear that people knew, therefore it was not concealed. If it is not concealed, then this son as a matter of course has birth parents. Lesser people do not know about righteousness and ritual, and consider raising a son a private affair; they fear that people will learn about it,

⁸⁸⁶ It appears that the different parts of *Puyi* have been separated in the QSW in the editing process as follows: 濮議序. QSW. vol. 34, j. 717, p. 74-75. 濮議答問. vol. 35, j. 738, 80-85. 濮議本末. j. 744, 184-189.

and therefore conceal that he had parents originally, and are bent on [him] wholeheartedly being considered as their native son, and therefore only fear that concealing it will not stay secret.

Once I tried to talk about it in an essay, saying: in case in antiquity one was unlucky to have no son, and took on a son from the same clan as an adopted heir, the sage approved of that, put it in writing in the ritual classics and did not conceal it. Yet, in later generations the common and vulgar people then concealed it, and in concealing it they could not bear the deception and hypocrisy that came with it. Therefore when they wantonly and clandestinely obtained an infant son in swaddling clothes, they concealed his father and mother and deceived themselves, and therefore acted as if he was their native son, saying that if it was not done in this way, then he would not be able to bestow his utmost love on them with unified resolve, instead his heart could not be but divided. And the one who became their son, also himself concealed who had given life to him, and cut off the father endowed to him by heaven, and instead considered him an uncle, in this way misrepresenting his nine degrees of kinship, and throwing into disorder the hierarchy of kinship between men and spirits.

Among all things that are born and are endowed with consciousness, there is none that does not love its father and mother, if this son could bear to really cut off what is his heavenly endowed disposition, then this is something that even birds and beasts are not capable of. If he could not bear it and were to only outwardly cut them off, this amounts to great hypocrisy. As deep as the anxiety of the common people may be about this matter, but wanton and clandestine, deceptive and hypocritical behavior cannot be considered a model, it is a thing [that] lesser people do. Only for the sage this [thinking] does not apply, he considers none of the human ways of greater [importance] than having an heir or not, this has been a constant institution for eternity, and is the most public matter in all under heaven, what need is there to conceal it! Of what we call ‘sons’, there is none who would not have been born by parents, therefore an adopted son necessarily has a father he was born to, this is the nature of the principle. Something that is simple and easy to understand, not wanton and clandestine, nor deceiving and false, what can become a constant institution and be conducted in public, is the model of the sage.

[...He repeats the argument seen above, namely that it is possible to give both their due by reducing the mourning period for the natural father. Even the language of Renzong’s edict in his opinion showed that he recognized the parenthood of Prince Pu. Ouyang Xiu then goes on to qualify his disparaging statements about the commoners, while at the same time he apparently responds to the hypothetical argument of the opposition that Yingzong could not call both Renzong and Prince Pu ‘father’ if both were still alive, supporting the argument that there cannot be two fathers.]⁸⁸⁷

As to the people on the street, if they meet a senior person of their village or a virtuous person, then as a matter of course out of respect they assume a solemn and respectful manner, when running into an old friend they have not seen in a long time, then as a matter of course they are motivated by their joy to take on a cheerful and loving tone. If today one were to run into one’s biological father, and would not express respect and love, then this would be worse than the people on the street. [However, a sage would only ask of other people what he could manage to do himself first.]⁸⁸⁸

Aside from the fact that it is questionable if Renzong really intended to express much with his edict, given his lackluster attitude to the adoption as such, this passage once again exhibits in a positive way the normative content that the term ‘public’ has in Ouyang Xiu’s opinion, which

⁸⁸⁷ Such as in the passage discussed above: (CB. vol. 8, j. 195, p. 4729). However, the ‘questioner’ adds to that the assumption that Yingzong would approach Prince Pu, and according to the opposition not be allowed to show any respect or love.

⁸⁸⁸ 濮議答問. QSW. vol. 35, j. 738, 83-85.

works by virtue of public scrutiny that on one hand ensures that things done in its limelight are good, but on the other hand causes people of questionable integrity and motives to shy away from it. Once again, the overlap between the concepts ‘public’ and ‘impartiality’ is readily apparent in this passage, where clearly both interpretations of *gong* are at play at the same time. The point to be made is that a sage would not try to conceal a fact of such fundamental importance as the fatherhood of an adopted son.

The question, somewhat simplified, that still awaits an answer is, who were the hypocrites after all? The framework coined by Seligman et al. would provide a clear-cut verdict on who the hypocrites were in this story, for the kind of sincerity that Sima Guang called for and practiced in their view invariably leads to hypocrisy and social destruction, a hypothesis we will return to in the conclusions.⁸⁸⁹ While Sima Guang’s earlier involvement in Yingzong’s succession also might point in that direction, this had turned out to be a position held by one of our protagonists as well, and as such cannot be taken over wholesale for the final historical assessment of the development from *qingli* to *puyi*, which needs to be more nuanced than that. So, put differently, and more neutrally, did Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi change their mind about things such as censorial rights, ritual and sincerity, reform, and social renewal? Although their respective responses mainly refer to the *xining* reform program, James T.C. Liu and Peter Bol have already provided two contradicting answers to this question: some changes towards the end of Ouyang Xiu’s life cannot be excluded, but for Liu, the *qingli* reformers had always been gradualists, since before and during their reform attempt they already had warned that renewal would be a long-term project, and could not be implemented too hastily. In other words, the discrepancy

⁸⁸⁹ Seligman, et al., *Ritual and its Consequences*. p. 108, 110, 113, 128.

between earlier reforms and later criticism of reforms is due to the fact that the ideas of reform of the *qingli* good men always had been different from those of the *xining* protagonists, particularly Wang Anshi.⁸⁹⁰ Bol, on the other hand, detects a change of heart, particularly with Ouyang Xiu, in his actions and writings late in his life, with respect to the reformatory ideas that he had still adhered to before and during *qingli*.⁸⁹¹ In this interpretation, it is this change of outlook and reform-mindedness, triggered, or at least influenced by the earlier failure of *qingli*, which caused the dispute between the old guard of *qingli* and Wang Anshi. One of the main arguments in favor of this view would be the editorial choices made by Ouyang Xiu for his own *wenji*, in which he edited out the first part of ‘On Fundamentals’, the text that, as we have seen above, provided the intellectual foundation of the earlier reform attempt. Despite the fact that this dissertation actually did not touch on the *xining*-period itself, I would venture to give an answer to this question, merely from the perspective of what we have seen happening in the Renzong and Yingzong reigns.

It seems to me that this is a case in which no absolute judgment is possible, instead, the answer depends very much on the perspective that one takes. As should have become clear in the course of the narrative, both general positions and ideology of the *qingli* good men, as well as some more specific political projects regarding the exams and officialdom, changed very little over the course of the career of Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi, as far as they were definable at all. This has

⁸⁹⁰ Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*. p. 44, 72, 114-115.

⁸⁹¹ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 191-201; particularly p. 196-197, conclusion p. 201. Implicitly this explains the resistance to the *xining* reforms. Bol in this chapter describes many of the features of what we have called the ‘ritual side’ of the *qingli* argument, the use of duality and dialectics, etc., the difference is that to me it seems that these had always been a feature of their worldview, including that of Ouyang Xiu in his early years; this does not preclude that these became emphasized more in his later days.

become especially apparent for the terms ritual and public, which both practically and theoretically were conceptualized in a similar way by Fan Zhongyan in the 1030s and by Ouyang Xiu late in his life in his writings on *puyi*. While Ouyang Xiu changes the way he talks about the public in the context of the *puyi* dispute, emphasizing the possibility that a majority is mistaken in its verdict, the position he expressed does not directly contradict what he had said about it earlier, although a certain exasperation with the ‘wrong’ verdict of the majority is noticeable. According to texts as late as the last years of the Renzong era, the public, as well as the debates taking place in the public sphere, but also the censors provided a normative safeguard and check on ministerial and imperial powers and favoritism, and a conduit for good men to recognize each other and multiply themselves. However, it was not supposed to provide the ‘right’ decision as such, which continued to be the prerogative of the emperor, even in the heydays of their opposition in the 1030s, and as such a plurality of opinions was not much of a problem. As we have seen, despite all their rhetoric, even before *qingli* there were phases in which the ‘good men’ acted in expedient, compromising ways to attain their goals, notably in the alliance, however short lived, with Lü Yijian. Ritual was seen as an institution that served to overcome the fragmented nature of the world and human sentiments towards it, in which it was hard to adjudicate good and bad in absolute and eternal terms, and in fact the change in ritual that Fan Zhongyan suggested in the time of Dowager Liu closely resembled how Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu intended to solve a similar problem between Dowager Cao and Yingzong, both relegating the female regent to her status as mother after the emperor had no need for the regency any more, and splitting the ritual for her to reflect the complexities of the situation. Thus, it is clear that the ritual mode, as defined by our framework, at all times had been part of the repertoire of the *qingli* ‘good men’, including with regard to the social ritual carried out with former political opponents.

It is important to admit that these statements about a basic continuity in their positions must be somewhat qualified by pointing to the influence, and interest, that Ouyang Xiu potentially had in painting the picture of *qingli* and Fan Zhongyan in this way to legitimize his own decisions; after all, many sources that support this interpretations seem to have gone through his hand in some way or other. However, particularly for the presence of the ritual mode it seems to me that given the multiple sources, as well as texts by Fan Zhongyan himself that express and practice this, such as the condolence for Lü Yijian, and moreover the equally strong influence and interest of the other side, that is Fan's son Fan Chunren and Fu Bi, this assessment can still be considered essentially correct, despite some aspects that might have been made to look more continuous than they in fact were.⁸⁹² Moreover, given the presence of the connection between ritual and human sentiments in Ouyang's own pre-reform writing, notably in 'On Fundamentals', it is unlikely that his own worldview had changed in a fundamental way on this topic. In summary, the remaining *qingli* good men, Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu, could point to these continuities and legitimately claim that they had not betrayed their original beliefs in their actions and proclamations during *puyi*. From this perspective, they had always been gradualists to some extent, or within our framework, they had always had the ritual mode in their repertoire of expressions and actions.

However, it seems to me that for the case of what we called the sincere mode, that is, the claims to sincerity that appeared before and during *qingli* the verdict must be a bit more complicated. As

⁸⁹² This refers to the instances discussed above, where accounts in the sources that present Fan Zhongyan as mitigating more radical approaches within his own group may be a later emphasis.

far as we can tell, sincerity for the *qingli* good men was a situational affair, something that time and again had to be negotiated between the different normative demands and possible expressions in a given situation within a fundamentally fragmented world. We have seen repeatedly that these negotiations and difficulties were expressed by way of dualities of equally valid norms. It is not expressed directly as such by the *qingli* ‘good men’, but the word *wen* used for both ritual and literary form suggests to me that the process of finding the right ritual form might have been considered very much comparable to the act of writing, in which choices had to be made constantly to find the perfect form for the text to be created, a form that not just reflected one’s current inner states or sentiments (and the plural here is decisive), but also took the audience, and the situation into account. What they criticized in their youth was the fact that in their days the connection between form and normative content had been lost, in literary production and exam culture, but also in politics, where in the early Renzong period ostentatious, public, ritual displays and ‘what ought to be’ were largely disconnected from the decisions actually made in the backrooms of power. While there was qualitatively better guidance to be gained from the classics and antiquity, the contingencies of the historical fragmentation made it necessary to draw on other sources and references as well, and so there were a plethora of possible forms and precedents that were acceptable and useful in a given situation. This is not to say that the individual ‘good men’ had no personal, strong opinion about how these connections were best made, but the decisive point was to accept that such connection was lacking at the moment, possible in principle, and desirable at all, and therefore the movement was very much able to incorporate different opinions on particulars into the intellectual association. However, in a political culture in which it was not a given that outward form and *dao*, proclamation and decision-making was supposed to and could be connected, the mere claim and display that such

connection was possible served to differentiate who was inside and who was outside of this group. It is in this political environment, which in the 1030s would not make any concessions to their demands, that the ‘good men’ employed the *wen* of sincerity, both in their texts and in their actions, against a political culture that was suspicious of the claim as such, and in the person of Emperor Renzong sanctioned it immediately for its potential to disturb the formal, superficial unity that he was so intent on preserving. All sincere rhetoric notwithstanding, in concrete political practice, considerations about the ‘audience’ (emperor, other ‘good men’, officials in general) led to many compromises regarding the cooperation with officials that were not ‘good men’, but even regarding the programmatic nature, argument for, and ‘speed’ of the *qingli* reform project itself, as well as particular measures that met with the disapproval of their associates. But given that sincerity was situational, and had to take place in a world that could not be unfragmented as such at this point, this was not considered an immediate normative problem; the first order of business was that more ‘good men’ that shared their essential values would be recognized and employed in government, to start on the long and winding road towards a better world.

As argued in this dissertation, two things happened in this situation: the *qingli* project failed politically against the resistance of the emperor, possibly aided by opposing interest groups at court. At the same time, this catastrophic, public failure and the subsequent resurgence of the remaining protagonists, as well as their efforts at recommendation, had a deep impact on their literati peers, regardless whether they were participants, observers, opponents, or successors to their endeavor. In this way *qingli* project still achieved part of its goal, in that it changed court and literati culture, and reformed and informed literati consciousness and their intellectual

project. Henceforth, the fact that there should be a close connection between form and content, *wen* and *dao* was not disputed again as such, and the same goes for normative interpretations of the public and the public sphere. But while the basic premise was accepted, the intellectual question remained if the *qingli* good men had been sincere enough, or put differently, if it would have helped to ground their claims in something more concrete and unambiguous than all the classics and all of history. The late success of the project came at a price, however, since the experience during *qingli* and beyond had also shown the need to differentiate between those who were sincere, as it were, and those who merely saw the project as a conduit to their own advancement. This is why we see the ways of thinking at that time become more concrete and specialized, and also notice that literati, rather than accepting the multivalent and fragmented nature of the classics and tradition, but also the world they lived in as such, started to look for ways to unfragment it both in the here and now. More specifically, following a comment by Bol, I would argue that this is what motivated Sima Guang and Wang Anshi to ground their own thoughts in something ‘real’ and more concrete already in the immediate aftermath of the reform project that they had witnessed;⁸⁹³ Sima Guang went for a fixed ritual hierarchy and well-researched history for guidance, whereas Wang Anshi decided that antiquity as such, without the historical clutter, would be the best way to ground his ideas on how to make a better world. Yet, as I have argued above, in both cases that difference of opinion as such did not lead to an immediate political break with the ‘good men’; as a matter of fact some dissatisfaction with the ambiguity of both their deeds and words was palpable within the *qingli* association at the time, and later even among its core members, namely when Fu Bi and Ouyang Xiu clashed over the text of Fan Zhongyan’s epitaph; this is not just a dispute about *wen*, but they are also arguing

⁸⁹³ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 236-237.

about the validity of their respective interpretation of Fan Zhongyan as more moderate or more radical politician; this case shows that the divide could and did happen slowly, and very much within the core group of the association we have called the ‘good men’; once again it is important to point out that there always had been more radical officials among them, not to speak of their differences of opinion, both of which, however, had not caused permanent breaks before. Earlier, it had been the ambiguity of the words and deeds of Fan Zhongyan and company that had made this inclusiveness possible, helping them to act ‘as if’ they had more in common than they had, while at the same time promoting their public cause. Now, however, the indisputable existence of the exclusive ‘good men’ rhetoric made it possible to draw on their legacy to legitimize a more radical political behavior, and while we have argued that the moderate side was very much part of the historical figure Fan Zhongyan, this is not to say that the thinkers that attempted to excise this ambiguity and moderation did not have a valid intellectual point. A view that assumes clearly differentiated factions at work from the beginning will not capture the extent and, for lack of a better word, drama of this socio-intellectual development.

At the same time, this intellectual development was very much driven by political events, for as would turn out when the political cooperation between *qingli* good men and their successors ran into unforeseeable problems during Yingzong’s reign, the dichotomies that the earlier good men had to offer as solutions, ritual and righteousness/benevolence, *wen* and *dao*, and implicitly ritual and sincerity, as opposed to sincere ritual, were not specific enough for the likes of Sima Guang, who in this situation turned to one side, righteousness, for the normatively unequivocal solution to the problem, and could not acquiesce to any compromise in a question that appeared so fundamental to them; in this way it can be explained how both sides came from the same

background of the *qingli* reforms, had used similar language and concepts in their proclamations past and present, and in fact could with some, albeit varying, degree of legitimacy claim that they were continuing the legacy of the *qingli* project of renewal. For from the perspective of the *puyi* opposition, the chancellery could only have betrayed the very ideas of sincerity that they had proclaimed in *qingli*, and acted solely in their own interest with their suggestion, especially given the way that the succession had been brought about by them, and the ethical baggage that this campaign brought with it; Sima Guang went so far as quoting Fan Zhongyan's cosmological references to them, as well as Ouyang Xiu's proclamations about the role of censors to make the point. The fact that Ouyang Xiu and Han Qi had to rely on backroom dealing to organize their compromise seemed to make this even more apparent. Since the backroom dealing prior to and during *qingli* had not entered the public consciousness, as the incredulity shows with which Ouyang Xiu's version of Fan's life was greeted, from the perspective of the opposition, Ouyang Xiu had indeed changed his mind about how to act in politics, and as a 'good man'. From Sima Guang's perspective, the difference between the radically moralizing *wen* of Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu before and during *qingli* and their acts in *zhiping* indeed must have been reflective of a change of inner state, from being 'good' to being 'bad'.

However, *wen* for Ouyang Xiu was not just reflecting one inner state, but was contingent on many factors, including the needs of the situation and the audience, and the example of 'On Fundamentals' and its editorial history lends itself to support this point: firstly, the text in what we assume is its original state in three parts makes a sincere *and* a ritual argument. Politically important and influential was the first part, and we have shown that it and its core demand had a profound influence on the *qingli* reform, and the proclamations made over its course; it was

written in a way to reflect this complex situation and the diverse audiences it was supposed to have, and therefore purported to proclaim a coherent program when it actually first and foremost called for *one* thing at this point, recognizing the ‘good men’; yet, Ouyang Xiu here also had already set up the other side of the dichotomy as well, and emphasized the role of ritual in the larger part of his essay, without it having the same impact on contemporary politics, which after all, at this point was not sincere enough in the ‘good men’s’ eyes. Because inner state and outer form has a more ambiguous relationship for Ouyang Xiu, we will never know for sure why the part proclaiming a coherent program late in his life was excised by Ouyang Xiu from his own redaction of his *wenji*, despite the fact an interpretation is convincing that considers his editorial decision a reaction to the institutional program of the *xining* reforms that seemed to draw on the ideas it expressed.⁸⁹⁴ It is absolutely possible that Ouyang Xiu’s thinking did evolve and change to some degree, that ritual became more prominent in his post-*qingli* worldview, and that moderation was more important in the remainder of his career. However, his effort at redacting his own legacy can also be explained in a different way: Ouyang Xiu hardly could have been oblivious to the fact that the first chapter of ‘On Fundamentals’ gave a blueprint and textual precedent to proponents of programmatic reform that aimed at unfragmenting the world in *xining*, and in this way allowed them to take recourse to his own, situational *wen* for their project; although we have argued that a reading that emphasizes its coherence and assumes that it ascribes equal value to the five steps would ignore that there is a sequence and a core demand, this is still a viable reading, or variation of the theme; in *qingli* some literati already seem to have expected more given the contemporary voices that criticized the lack of a far-reaching economic program back then. When taking this chapter off the table by excising it from his *wenji* Ouyang

⁸⁹⁴ Schirokauer, Hymes, “Introduction”, in: *Ordering the World*. p. 14-16.

Xiu then achieved two things: on one hand he acknowledged that this demand had been met to some extent, for in *xining* it was supposedly the fame of Wang Anshi that got him into office, and it generally was much less questioned than before that the emperor should be selective in his appointments, in fact with divisive consequences. The famous instance of Wang Anshi staying in the government and Sima Guang leaving is a case in point, for both sides said that Shenzong must decide which one he wanted to follow. Secondly, however, he indeed also distanced himself from the current reforms and intellectual trends, and highlighted the remaining two chapters about ritual, thus drawing the gaze of contemporary readers, and historiography, to the concept that most of the next generation failed to take seriously and on its own merit at the time. However, that is not the same as saying that his thinking about his own reform had changed, or that he distanced himself from his or his associates' earlier ideas, for these were indeed different from Wang Anshi's approach in important aspects, as we have seen above, when discussing what *youwei*, activism, had entailed in *qingli*. In this way, this interpretation takes the assumption seriously that the form, the *wen* of 'On Fundamentals' is situational and ambivalent, and does not contain absolute value or relate to a unified inner state beyond the immediate, historical and personal situation; writing the first chapter had had its specific significance under the circumstances of the 1040s, and the act of deleting it from his *wenji* and distancing himself from too coherent and totalizing interpretations of it was making a point now, independent of whether or not he changed his mind about his own reforms. Likewise, when highlighting the moderating aspects of Fan Zhongyan's political life in his own writings about him, Ouyang Xiu qualified the current view of Fan as the epitome of radical rhetoric and moral action, and balanced it with Fan's other side to make it harder to use him as an example and precursor for the current trend towards more radicalism; this is not necessarily indicating a reinterpretation of *qingli* on his part.

On the other hand we have seen that the opposition, and especially Sima Guang, in connection with Yingzong's adoption and succession had taken part in actions that were highly problematic from an ethical perspective, and moreover led to a situation in which the desired outcome, namely a strong emperor, a legitimized succession, and unity among 'good men' arguably had not been achieved. They could tell themselves that they had argued for and done what was the right thing under these circumstances, but it would be hard to claim that all was well when Shenzong came to the throne, and the old 'government' was removed from their positions of influence. As we will argue in the conclusion, the problematic situation caused by this moral predicament would have a crucial effect on the coming government, when Shenzong turned to the one famous 'good man' of the next generation who had *not* taken part in the campaign for his succession, and, given the outcome, in this way had once again proven that he was the most sincere, and wise, of all.

Conclusion: From savior to destroyer – Wang Anshi’s ambiguous relationship to the ‘good men’

When talking about the 11th century, it has been customary to highlight the political, military, and economic crisis that the Song state found itself in at the time as the primary motivation and cause for the different reform projects during that time.⁸⁹⁵ That there were problems in these areas is hard to deny, and highlighting them therefore remains a necessary part of Song historiography. The question, though, is how much the court and *shi*-elites were actually affected by them in practice, for it seems to me that there is a tendency to take the plethora of alarmist passages in memorials, and the many instances when the court called for action somewhat too seriously, at least before the fall of the North and the very real impact that this had; once again, however, we should remember that both the emperor and the literati had an interest in expressing their concern for the state and the people, and act ‘as if’ they were taking care of both; after all it was hard to make any argument for political reform without the reference to some immediate and practical danger. This observation is corroborated by those instances when the argument that there was a crisis at hand in fact appears to have been questioned openly, as in Wang Anshi’s case, prompting him to write a long reply that laid out why the dynasty was not safe despite there being “no [grave] mishap in 100 years,” trying hard to show that the dynasty so far had only been lucky with its mediocre government performance, and that disaster could loom ahead if one did not act decisively (*da youwei*) here and now.⁸⁹⁶ At other instances (On Fundamentals, *Wan yan shu*), the writers would point out that there was a crisis, but at the same time enumerated the

⁸⁹⁵ McGrath, “The Reigns of Jen-tsung and Ying-tsung.” p. 326-334. Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 350-352.

⁸⁹⁶ QSW. vol. 64, j. 1382, p. 14-16. Smith, “Shen-tsung’s Reign.” p. 361-362.

successes of the dynasty, as well as of the opportunity that the Song founding had provided to get things right for the first time since antiquity. Thus, when talking about the motivation for literati to act and assume responsibility in their time, these practical problems for the most part played the role of a symptom, and a case in point, showing that things were not what they should or could be yet. In other words, it seems to me that it was more of an intellectual crisis than a practical one, which prompted literati to look for new ways to ‘order the world’. However, it is important to also see and acknowledge the flip side of this coin, namely the promise that literati saw in their current situation, i.e. the increasingly important role they were given in the state, a promise prompting them to think and talk about what could and should be in the first place. We have argued that Ouyang Xiu and his close *qingli* associates were not that sure if that ideal state represented by antiquity could be reached in their lifetime given the historical breaks that had happened, but that in fact makes it more remarkable that they would try to take the first steps on what they considered a long and winding road; especially in Fan Zhongyan’s case he would do so from a relatively low position, and without much hope to get ahead, which takes a considerable amount of self-confidence and trust in his and his peer’s potential and abilities to actually deliver on this promise, a confidence that is expressed in his early statements on the matter. At the same time, the confidence was not large enough for Fan Zhongyan and the others to refrain from attaching themselves to a variety of other officials and literati, both established and aspiring, some closer to their thinking, and some not, but many with a similar idea how an official should act in this situation to fulfill the promise that something could and should be done. This is what we have called the ‘good men’ here, a self-declared group defined by diverse kinds of connections that were both based on similar, if general ideas *and* social ritual; this group could be inclusive and exclusive at the same time, and in fact this very ambiguity, the lack of concrete

normative and political content of the term created the potential that would help actors keep up their relationships beyond political disagreements and defeat. At the same time, this group at several points campaigned against other officials, and with their proclamations dominated the public sphere that they had recognized as their best chance and conduit to get ahead, make a name, and multiply their influence. It is only in comparison with their acts, the attempts to compromise and refrain from radical rhetoric in their concrete measures, and when seeing the less prominent instances of cooperation with their enemy, that we recognize that this merely was one side of the *qingli* story, and not all of it. If Fan Zhongyan and his core associates ever had dramatically changed their minds about how to act in politics and became moderate, it would have been before *qingli*, after Fan was sent away for his disputes with Lü Yijian in the 1030s, and saw that radicalism alone would not get him far in this environment; however, while it seems plausible to me that there was a tension between the more moderate and the more radical elements among his allies, the political attacks by Ouyang Xiu and some others in all probability still were part of the ‘good men’s’ overall political concept, regardless of the fact that Fan Zhongyan supposedly reined in some of his less careful associates, and himself refrained from participating in the attacks, especially on Lü Yijian and his family. In these cases, the targets of attack seem to have been selected quite carefully, and from a political perspective, not from a radical-ideological one.

It has long been pointed out that both Sima Guang and Wang Anshi were part of that larger, more general literati effort at getting things right in the realm,⁸⁹⁷ but here we have argued for diverse, but very concrete intellectual, personal, and political connections to the *qingli* ‘good

⁸⁹⁷ This is of course referring to Bol, *This Culture of Ours*.

men' and their project, which is especially surprising in the case of Sima Guang, who hitherto had been considered an outsider to the reform group. Yet, our findings about the nature of the *qingli* group has made it possible to recognize that Sima Guang's vision, especially in its pre-Yingzong version, was not so extremely different that it could not be part of what the good men could legitimately think and argue for. In fact, some close reading of his writing indicates that Sima Guang only after the beginning of the political turmoil of *puyi* developed a stricter view about the founder's stipulations, a view that only now turned indeed out to be incompatible to what the remaining *qingli* men argued for at this point. Given the problematic history of Yingzong's succession and Sima Guang's role in it, we have argued that at least part of this radicalization was due to his sense of responsibility for the outcome of this project, which he had begun to pursue with Han Qi, Ouyang Xiu, and several other participants in *puyi*.

Wang Anshi on the other hand for obvious reasons had always been considered closer to the *qingli* reforms, and indeed the *Wan yan shu* can be interpreted as an attempt to attach himself to the remaining *qingli* protagonists when they returned to power in the 1050s, and set out his own version of the *qingli* claim. This version was not the exact same one, especially in terms of the degree of coherence, but there is still enough overlap with it to recognize it as such; moreover, the economic side of what would become Wang's reform project certainly was underrepresented in this earlier programmatic text, that is, precisely those parts that later would become such a bone of contention with the remaining *qingli* reformers.⁸⁹⁸ In other words, the assumption that there had been close personal and intellectual connections between Wang and *qingli* is corroborated at this point. At the same time, Wang Anshi only little later broke quite publicly

⁸⁹⁸ See the different memorials about *qingmiaofo* written by *qingli* men.

with the recently returned *qingli* men, it would seem precisely because they failed to fulfill his hopes of decisive action, *youwei*, and Wang instead appears to have revised his earlier verdict on the quality of these men; it is probably for this reason that, as noted several times now, Wang Anshi stayed away from court, and remained aloof and did not take part either in the campaign for Yingzong's succession, or in the subsequent political disputes, including *puyi*.⁸⁹⁹ This is another indication that he was the most radical of all politically, since he in this way quite openly showed and stated that he would only return to court if there was a better chance, with a decisive emperor, to actually implement his ideas. Given the ethical problems with a succession campaign that relied on the empress and on changing Renzong's intention, not to speak of the questionable outcome of the endeavor, this seems to fit well with what we have argued earlier, namely that judging by his actions he was considered the most sincere of the politicians at the time.

The following excerpt from one of his writings, 'On ritual and music', gives testimony that at this point, late in his life, he also was adhering to an exclusively sincere mode regarding what we have taken as a benchmark for that, visions of ritual.⁹⁰⁰ Now he expressed his sincere reading of ritual in no uncertain terms, that is, he fully integrated it into his coherent system of how the world worked, and in fact directly connected it to the term sincerity, and an inner state:

Someone who can fulfill his [human] nature, is someone perfectly sincere; someone who can be perfectly sincere, is someone with peace of mind, someone with peace of mind, is someone who nourishes the vital energy (*qi*); someone who can nourish the *qi* is someone who preserves one's outward form; someone who can preserve the form is nourishing the principle of life itself. Without nourishing the principle of life it will be impossible to fulfill one's nature. The vital principle and the nature follow and entail each other, the will and vital energy relate to each other as outer and inner. If the principle of life is turbid, then it conceals human nature, if human nature is turbid, then it conceals the vital principle, much like when the will is unified, it then interacts with *qi*, and when the *qi* is unified,

⁸⁹⁹ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*. p. 213.

⁹⁰⁰ One compilation dates this text and 'On Ritual' to early *yuanfeng* (1078–1085). *Wang Jinggong wenji jianzhu* 王荆公文集箋注. 3 vols. Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2005. vol. 2, p. 1030, 1033.

then it interacts with the will. The sage kings knew that this was the case, and therefore they gave a distinct structure to human nature in the world, and made ritual for that purpose, they harmonized human nature in all under heaven, and made music for that purpose. Ritual, is how the world achieves regularity, music is how the world achieves harmony. Ritual and music, that is how the sage kings nourished the spirit of the people, corrected the *qi* of the people in order to return to the correct [human] nature. Therefore the best of great ritual is simple and unadorned (*wuwen* 無文), the best of great music is gentle and soft. [To be] simple and gentle, that is the ultimate intention of the former kings when they created ritual and music. What the current generation values, the sages considered unimportant, what the current times enjoy, the sages were grieved about. It is not that the sentiments of the sages were the exact opposite of those of the current generation, it is that the sages sought [it in] the inner [state], and the current generation is seeking [it in] the outer [appearance]; the one who seeks it inside, is happy about realizing his nature, the one who seeks it in outer [appearances], is happy about getting what he desires; desire is easy to develop, but human nature is hard to know, this is how sentiment and nature [of the sages] became exactly the opposite [of what they are today]. Clothing and food serves to nourish the form and vital energy of people, ritual and music serves to nourish their human nature. Ritual returns it to its natural beginning, music returns it to its natural origin, I see in ritual and music that the way the sages valued their vital principle was perfect. A saying in this day and age is: to nourish the vital principle is not something the good man does. [Who says] this has not realized what the intention of the former kings was when creating ritual and music. Nourishing the vital principle serves to become benevolent, to preserve the vital energy serves to become righteous, getting rid of [superficial] sentiment and refraining from desire serves to fulfill the human nature of the world; to cultivate the spirit and extend enlightenment serves to hurry the development towards the state of [being] sages.⁹⁰¹

The purpose of ritual in this thought model is to fulfill human nature, it is quite literally an addition of the sages to help bring about the ‘natural’ interconnectedness between outward form and inner state, and steer it into the right direction, it has no function beyond that, or on its own. In short, for Wang Anshi, ritual is a way of getting to sincerity, an integral part of a moral, coherent order, but it is not an independent entity that would follow its own rules, and have its own, separate purpose. That does not mean that there is no compromise permissible, in fact in *Fei li zhi li*, ‘Ritual that is un-ritual’, Wang acknowledges that the sages seem to have made some concession to the desires of the ‘masses’ when instituting ritual, in the sense that they made it more lavish and extravagant than necessary to fulfill its essential purpose, but Wang Anshi asserts that when the reason for this expediency is gone, that is, when it does not go against the desires of the ‘masses’ any more, then the sages would as a matter of course make ritual frugal, because that is the essence of it; his witness for that was Confucius, and his call for simplicity in

⁹⁰¹ 禮樂論. QSW. vol. 64, j. 1402, 329.

ritual.⁹⁰² The point was to realize the intention behind ritual, not to copy the outward forms, and in this way it was possible to deviate from the form but still get it right. The last part shows that despite having fundamentally changed his interpretation, it still is not completely unconnected to what the earlier ‘good men’ had said, and in fact certain quotations remained important, such as the *Liji* quote (大禮與天地同節) we have seen discussed in one of Fan Zhongyan’s *fu*-poems, only that this time it was integrated into Wang Anshi’s argument about the centrality of (human) nature, and led over to metaphysical speculations about the importance of *yangsheng* techniques.⁹⁰³ Moreover, the term that Li Gou and Ouyang Xiu use is *xingyu* 性欲 and *qingxing* 情性, respectively, providing another hint that there is a discursive connection between them and Wang Anshi. But with the latter authors it is clear that desires and sentiments are mitigated and regulated by ritual, whereas Wang Anshi explicitly denies that basic connection in ‘On Ritual and Music’: “Therefore to talk about the fact that ritual is closely related to human sentiments is not getting to the bottom of it.”⁹⁰⁴ Instead, the point is to get rid of desire and outside influence, for with the sages, the *dao* existed before and independent of the outward form, and in fact could be transmitted and put to work without it. It is hard not to read that as a rejection of Ouyang Xiu’s position in the *puyi* debate, for while Sima Guang’s theory on ritual was different from Wang’s, the practical outcome for how humans should act was the same: Sima Guang called on the emperor to get rid of or ignore his (selfish) desire to honor his father, and to lock inside the heart what legitimate sentiment for Prince Pu should remain, to make room for the one ethical

⁹⁰² 非禮之禮. QSW. vol. 64, j. 1403, p. 342-343. This text is said to date to the *zhiping*-period (1063–1067). *Wang Jingong wenji jianzhu*. vol. 2, p. 1060. This would suggest a development towards a more radical view between this and the other two texts, but needs to be investigated further.

⁹⁰³ QSW. vol. 64, j. 1402, p. 330-331.

⁹⁰⁴ QSW. vol. 64, j. 1402, p. 330.

principle that was relevant in this situation, a principle that had to be enacted in all sincerity, implicitly in Sima Guang's words, explicitly in the words of some of his allies. In this way, at the very least in terms of ritual, Sima Guang's and Wang Anshi's position is not as incompatible as it would seem at first glance, if anything, Wang's was merely more radical and more 'sincere'; as he explains in a different text ('On Ritual'), reacting to Xunzi's idea of human artifice, how could ritual ever lead to falsehood or insincerity, was it not clear that it was intended to bring out the good nature of the people?⁹⁰⁵ However, the contention of Seligman et al. is that the correlation that we see between a sincere interpretation of ritual and the attempt to be socially exclusive is not a coincidence, and philosophically can be explained as a consequence of this way of thinking: if ritual is tied to an inner state, to something real in this way without allowing for any ambiguity, one in effect makes it less likely for the ritual subjunctive 'as if' to succeed and create and affirm a relationship on the basis of the very ambiguity thus excluded; because it is not discursive, sincere views of ritual will not completely prevent subjunctives from happening, but not being able to conceptualize ritual as such would lead to a tendency to look for the sincere basis in one's relationships when it 'counts', such as in a political crisis, or in a situation where there is a disagreement, and in this way endanger these interpersonal connections.

This brings us back to the political side of Wang Anshi's rise to power. It seems to me that it was this kind of sincerity in word and deed that was in high demand after *puyi*, because regardless of one's position and role in it, the questionable political campaign and the fierce debate had shown to all that things had not improved at all under Yingzong, who was supposed to have been the literati-emperor; in other words, the normative project once again was in crisis, and for those

⁹⁰⁵ 禮論. QSW. vol. 64, j. 1402, p. 327-328.

who favored what we have called the sincere mode of thought, Wang Anshi could appear to be the right person to get it right with his record of sincerity; this contention is somewhat supported by Sima Guang's own admission discussed earlier that people at some point had placed their hopes on Wang Anshi. However, with our knowledge of Yingzong's succession and the clash of the *puyi* 'factions' we can actually draw a more direct line between Sima Guang's actions and the rise of Wang Anshi: Sima Guang had had a large part in Yingzong's, and thus Shenzong's succession; especially the latter's tutors had been highly political positions, and had managed to sway the future emperor to side with the empress dowager, Sima Guang, and the opposition to the chancellors, or as they would probably put it, they had imbued him with the right mindset to decide on these things; as a consequence, the result of the chancellor's 'machinations', the recognition of Prince Pu as 'father' was immediately undone and declared a mistake by the emperor, a move that in one stroke took political influence away from the 'perpetrators', Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu, and left them no choice but to leave court, despite the delays and honors that were due to them as long-serving ministers. As discussed above, it was one of these tutors, Han Wei, who introduced the name Wang Anshi to Shenzong, since each time the prince liked something he had said, he would declare that that was Wang Anshi's idea, and there might be more connections that have not been preserved in the records. In fact, Sima Guang himself in one of his attacks would describe the basis of Shenzong's relationship to and promotion of Wang Anshi in the following way: "[...] But Your Majesty considers Wang Anshi to have the respected [status] of an old teacher of the emperor, and to have the favored [position] of an old friend, you made him a chancellor, and let him attend to government affairs."⁹⁰⁶ However, if Sima Guang's

⁹⁰⁶ 奏彈王安石表. QSW. vol. 54, j. 1175, p. 176. This is the memorial where he declares that Wang Anshi and he, like ice and coal cannot be used together, and like cold and heat cannot exist at the same time. Sima Guang should have been in the position of old teacher and friend, given his role in the succession and later; in all probability it is

assessment is accurate here, it was Han Wei's doing that Shenzong would consider Wang Anshi as such. Now, it would be going too far to say that Sima Guang earlier might have actively instigated Han Wei to make Shenzong familiar with Wang Anshi's name, since we have no proof for that, but given how politicized the tutor position was otherwise, it seems that he at least could have *prevented* this from happening, had he been as convinced as he was later that Wang Anshi indeed was a bad person, and on the other side politically.⁹⁰⁷ Again we see that a view of factions as invariably intentional and structured hides possible connections that are neither, but still highly relevant for our understanding of events. At this time, Wang Anshi merely appeared to be another 'good man' with different ideas, maybe a bit stubborn, but certainly sincere enough to be part of the new iteration of this group after Han Qi and Ouyang Xiu did not belong to it anymore; even Sima Guang, among many others, might have secretly appreciated Wang Anshi's foresight and principled stance to not get involved with the succession and the subsequent political disputes, and counted it in Wang's favor rather than against him. In this way, despite not having been part of it himself, it ironically was Wang Anshi who ultimately profited from the political campaign that had been started in the Renzong's reign, to bring the 'good men' to power by creating a strong bond between them and future emperors.

this role, and the gratitude that they owed him for that, that would make both Yingzong and Shenzong reluctant to see Sima Guang resign, rather than the attempt to have more diversity among their officials. For some reason he is mentioning the empress dowager here as well: "Executing and expelling the seditious ministers, employ upright *shi*, above in order to obey the intention of the empress dowager, below in order to console the hearts of the myriad people, then I and the others will withdraw and comply with execution, to the point of being willing."

⁹⁰⁷ That the position was politicized is attested to by Sima Guang's memorial, mentioned above, which demanded more access to the prince for 'good men' tutors, and explicitly stated the goal to bring 'good people' closer to him, and keep bad people away (CB. vol. 8, j. 198, p. 4807-08).

In other words, much as with Sima Guang's radicalization during the *puyi* clash, I argue that when Wang Anshi came to power and started to act in the wrong way, Sima Guang reacted strongly against him because he felt responsible for Wang's rise; by ensuring the succession of Yingzong and Shenzong, and by not preventing Han Wei from promoting his friend with his disciple, that is, by not being decisive enough, he in hindsight had helped to create the very historical situation that had taken such a bad turn from his perspective. While it had to remain an educated assumption for *puyi* for lack of direct evidence, Sima Guang in one of his more unusual attacks on Wang Anshi actually confessed his sense of responsibility for not having spoken out against Wang Anshi earlier. Despite the rhetorical function of this ostentatious remorse to increase the hyperbole, it still should be taken seriously, since the first episode about Lü Hui is to some extent corroborated by a different source, albeit transmitted in the same *biji*, which has Sima Guang warn Lü Hui that a majority had high hopes for Wang Anshi, at a point when Lü was on his way to handing in the memorial against Wang.⁹⁰⁸

In my lack of talent, I rank lowest among the officials, [my] foresight does not match Lü Hui's, in terms of impartiality and frankness I am no match for Fan Chunren, and Cheng Hao, [my] daring and outspokenness does not match that of Su Shi and Kong Wenzhong, in terms of bravery and resoluteness I am no match for Fan Zhen. Lü Hui, at the time when Wang Anshi just had become vice chancellor, already talked about Wang Anshi as being treacherous and evil, and said that he without fail will bring chaos to the realm. I assumed that Wang Anshi would merely fail to understand matters and be headstrong, nothing more than that, and that it would not get [as bad] as Lü Hui had said. Today we observe Wang Anshi recommending and promoting his trusted followers and faction members, [we saw him] become entrenched in key positions; [and] get rid of those who are different from him, he secured and monopolized the power granted by the emperor [to high officials]. Oftentimes he himself draws on his own ideas to secretly 'aid' the emperor in issuing handwritten orders from inside, so as to decide the matters of the outer court, causing the [power] of punishment and reward in the realm to reside with him, and the blame [for these bad decisions] to be entirely placed at the door of the emperor. Thus I myself recognized that my foresight did not match that of Lü Hui.

Both Fan Chunren and Cheng Hao were good friends with Wang Anshi, Wang raised them from among the common officials, and they were elevated [out of order] to much coveted positions [by him]. Fan Chunren and Cheng Hao observed what Wang Anshi was doing, and did not dare to consider selfish kindness [they had received as paramount], and abandon impartial public debate, and emphatically talked about his shortcomings. I and Wang

⁹⁰⁸ *Wenjian houlu*. j. 23, p. 176-178. For both the memorial and the episode where Sima Guang in effect tries to prevent Lü Hui from handing in a memorial against Wang Anshi, pointing to public opinion at the time that approved Wang's promotion.

Anshi [on the other hand] hail from different homes in the North and the South, in doing things we followed a different Way, the relationship that connected me with Wang Anshi was a distant one, and Wang Anshi treated me in a cold way, merely for the reason of having repeatedly been colleagues in office, my selfish mind prevailed, and was unwilling to cut off [this relationship] lightly and report on him earlier; [instead] I procrastinated to the present day. Therefore I did not blame Wang Anshi, and instead blamed Your Majesty much more. This is the extent to which I do not match Fan Chunren and Cheng Hao. I am unworthy of my post in the *liang zhi*, and [still] went on to serve three emperors; in the state, righteousness sets apart the ranks of ruler and minister, but kindness still are like its flesh and bones. Observing Wang Anshi tyrannically carrying out his crazy and stupid [ideas], causing the people of all under heaven to be overcome by the suffering [brought about by] sorrow and harm, [causing] the dynasty and the state to be in great, imminent danger, I am disgusted with my weakness and pity myself, for not having explicitly explained that to Your Majesty earlier. Su Shi and Kong Wenzhong both were insignificant and distant petty officials, and still dared to not avoid the danger of the towering rage of Your Majesty, or the fierce anger of Wang Anshi; they handed in a memorial against the policy, pointing out its mistakes one by one; they were dismissed from office and received their punishment, and then were free from all anxiety. This is the extent to which I am no match for Su Shi and Kong Wenzhong.⁹⁰⁹

This memorial on one hand has a positive social aspect to it, and contains a kind of subjunctive, in the sense that it essentially called other officials who had been quicker in condemning Wang Anshi ‘good men’, and in this way forged or reaffirmed a relationship that was purely based on their enmity for Wang Anshi and his reforms, but proved to be unstable when they came to power and had to decide how to undo the reforms. This becomes even clearer in the remainder of the memorial, which adds the story of Fan Zhen to the list, and ends with Sima Guang demanding to be dismissed like Fan Zhen had been, making a relationship public in much the same way as the ‘good men’ in the 1030s. On the other hand, however, it also speaks to the break of relationships that we have argued for above, for what Sima Guang even in this situation describes is *a* relationship, however distant, that he had with Wang Anshi, based on shared office-holding; it is likely that we can believe his qualification that it was not a close friendship, but in his own words there was still something going on between Wang Anshi and Sima Guang that was not a straightforward enmity.

⁹⁰⁹ 上神宗論王安石. QSW. vol. 55, j. 1208, p. 328-329.

Another important message that should not be overlooked is that there supposedly was a close personal connection between Fan Chunren, Cheng Hao, and Wang Anshi, again supporting that Wang Anshi at this point was very much part of the group we have called ‘the good men’, in its post *puyi* iteration, despite or because not implicating himself with the succession and the subsequent turmoil; given the relative influence they had gained over the new emperor, it is hard to explain Wang Anshi’s rise to power otherwise, for even his reputation needed to be transmitted to the emperor in some way. In other words, I argue that, if anything, Wang Anshi at this point was attached to his future enemies, at least by the looser standards that we have defined for the group of ‘good men’; in terms of thinking about ritual he also had more in common with them than he had with the *qingli* reformers. Attempts to bring in or cooperate with Cheng Hao, Su Che, and Lü Gongzhu that we have discussed in the introduction show that these were not just socially, but also politically relevant, and it also indicates that at least in the beginning, these promotions were done in the old spirit of the ‘good men’, that is, without being overly concerned that one would disagree on practical politics.

However, in the early days of his tenure as most influential minister, Wang Anshi and the other ‘good men’ sacrificed what relationship they had to what they saw as the right thing to do, with disastrous social consequences: after exhibiting some consideration for the problem of the state charging interest for the Green Sprouts Loan, Wang insisted on following his reform program to the letter, and that literati should obey regardless if they disagreed or not. The ‘good men’ on the other hand, started to attack Wang Anshi for his politics and morals, since for them both were intricately connected. In this way, rather than coming in with firm and preexisting factional connections, Wang in fact was deprived of many of his relationships at the point when he

secured his power, forcing him to make new connections and reevaluate the remaining ones (such as to Lü Huiqing), a fact that must have had consequences for the reforms themselves. We can only speculate here about what these consequences could have been, but one obvious example would be the emphasis of the program on economics, and the way that these economic reforms were implemented: in the *Wan yan shu*, Wang had already hinted in a general way at his view of economic problems, but this aspect had been very underdeveloped when compared to other things that he suggested, as we argued, this served to show his connection to the *qingli* reform tradition and its protagonists, which had recently returned to power. Now, however, economic reforms were the first to be implemented, and would continue to be the most important, and disputed, reform measures until the very end. One side of that was of course the aspirations that his patron, Shenzong, had for the reforms, which were supposed to provide him with the material means to improve the international standing of the dynasty, that is, to attack and diminish the northern states. The other side of it, somewhat following one of Sima Guang's criticisms, was that catering to Wang Anshi's and Shenzong's plans and proving that they worked must have become an important way to get ahead and be promoted, and become part of the ruling 'faction', because that is what Wang Anshi in effect demanded of his officials. It is very likely that this has steered the reform effort in a certain direction in terms of economic policy that was certainly related to, but not quite the same as what Wang proclaimed in the *Wan yan shu*. More generally, Wang's remaining relationships, and new ones that he forged, must have been influenced by his recent rise to power, and as such were much more hierarchical than his social circle had hitherto been, and it was his power that ensured that those who wished to remain in office would remain loyal to him. The fact that power, not ideology, was the main denominator for this group is attested to by how unstable these connections became when Wang

Anshi's influence with the emperor decreased in the most public manner, when he was forced to resign in 1074; from this perspective, the first resignation from office was the decisive one, and signaled to allies and enemies alike that his star was sinking, and that especially his allies might have to fend for themselves in the near future. More generally speaking, it was only after this break with the 'good men' in the early years of Shenzong, that both Wang Anshi and his old-friends-turned-enemies went on to base relationships on something real and concrete, that is, support for the reforms and unwavering, outward loyalty to Wang Anshi, or opposition to it. However, in doing so they in fact failed to create associations that were more stable than the earlier, more ambiguous group of *qingli* 'good men' had been before the prevalence of sincerity claims, for both the reformers and their opponents would break apart as soon as the actual basis for their relationship was removed: when Wang lost power between 1074 and 1076, as well as when Sima Guang and company came to power in 1085–86, and there was the problem of his group still having diverse ideas about how to undo the reforms exactly. As it would turn out, basing relationships on something 'real', an idea or shared norm was *not* the way to bring about the desired unity.

Works cited

Primary sources

Analects 論語 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>) (throughout text: *Scripta Sinica*). 重刊宋本論語注疏附校勘記.

Fan Wenzheng gong ji 范文正公集 [Collected works of Fan Zhongyan]. 四部叢刊正編; 40. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1979.

Hanyu dacidian 漢語大詞典 3.0 (CD-ROM edition). Hongkong: Commercial Press (H.K.) Ltd, 2007. (HYDCD).

Liji 禮記 [Book of Rituals] (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). 重刊宋本禮記注疏附校勘記.

Mencius 孟子 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). 重刊宋本孟子注疏附校勘記.

Mingchen beizhuan wanyan zhi jizhong 名臣碑傳琬琰之集中. Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition (electronic version).

Quan Song wen 全宋文 [Collected Song Prose]. 360 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 2006. (QSW).

Shao Bowen 邵伯溫. *Shao shi wenjian lu* 邵氏聞見錄 [Record of things that Mr. Shao heard and saw]. (Tang Song shiliao biji congan). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.

Shao Bo 邵博. *Shao shi wenjian houlu* 邵氏聞見後錄 [Second record of things that Mr. Shao heard and saw]. (Tang Song shiliao biji congan). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.

Shen Kuo/Gua 沈括. *Mengqi/xi bitan* 夢溪筆談 [Dream Pool Essays] (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). (equivalent to Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju 1960).

Shijing 詩經 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). 重刊宋本毛詩注疏附校勘記.

Sima Guang 司馬光. *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 [Mirror to aid in government] (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). (equivalent to Guji chubanshe, 1956 edition).

Songchao zhuchen zouyi 宋朝諸臣奏議 [Memorials by various officials of the Song-Dynasty]. Comp. by Zhao Ruyu (1140–1196). 2 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999.

Song huiyao jigao 宋會要輯稿 [Draft reconstruction of the collected documents of the Song] (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>).

Song shi 宋史 [Song Dynastic History]. Comp. by Tuotuo (1313 - 1355). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985. (SS).

Wang Jingong wenji jianzhu 王荊公文集箋注 [Annotated edition of Wang Anshi's collected works]. 3 vols. Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2005.

Yijing 易經 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). 重刊宋本周易注疏附校勘記.

Xin Tang shu 新唐書 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). (equivalent to Zhonghua shuju edition).

Xin Wudai shi 新五代史 (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). (equivalent to Zhonghua Shuju edition).

Xu zizhi tongjian changbian 續資治通鑑長編 [Long draft of the continued mirror to aid in government]. Comp. 1183 by Li Tao. 20 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004². (CB).

Xu zizhi tongjian changbian shibu 續資治通鑑長編拾補. [Supplement to the long draft...] Comp. by Huang Yizhou 1828–1899. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004.

Ye Shi 葉適. *Xixue jiyuan* 習學記言. Wenyuange Siku quanshu edition (electronic version).

Zhongwen dacidian 中文大辭典. Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua daxue chubanshe, 1990⁸.

Zhuzi Yulei 朱子語類 [Sayings of Master Zhu, arranged by category] (online version). *Scripta Sinica* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫, Academia Sinica 中央研究院-歷史語言研究所 (<http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm>). (Equivalent to Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

Secondary Sources

Balasz, Étienne. "A Forerunner of Wang An-shih," in: Étienne Balasz, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy. Variations on a Theme*. Translated by H.M. Wright; edited by Arthur F. Wright. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964. p. 277-289.

Bauer, Thomas. "Translator's Note," in: Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991 (first paperback edition).

Bol, Peter K. "The Sung Context: From Ou-yang Hsiu to Chu Hsi," in: Kidder Smith Jr., with Peter K. Bol, Joseph A. Adler, and Don J. Wyatt, *Sung Dynasty uses of the 'I Ching'*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. p. 27-55.

-----, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

-----, "Government, Society, and State: On the Political Visions of Ssu-ma Kuang and Wang An-shih," in: Robert P. Hymes, Conrad Shirokauer (eds.), *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. p. 128-192.

-----, "Emperors Can Claim Antiquity Too: Emperorhip and Autocracy under the New Policies," in: Patricia Ebrey, Maggie Bickford (eds.), *Emperor Huizong and late Northern Song China: the politics of culture and the culture of politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006. p. 173-205.

-----, "When Antiquity Matters: Thinking about and with Antiquity in the Tang-Song Transition," in: Dieter Kuhn, Helga Stahl (eds.), *Perceptions of Antiquity in Chinese Civilization*. (Würzburger Sinologische Schriften). Heidelberg: edition forum, 2008.

-----, *Neo-Confucianism in History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Bossler, Beverly. *Powerful Relations – Kinship, Status, and the State in Sung China (960–1279)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Buriks, Peter. "Fan Chung-yen's Versuch einer Reform des chinesischen Beamtenstaates in den Jahren 1043/44 [Fan Zhongyan's attempt at reforming the Chinese administrative state in the years 1043–44]." *Oriens Extremus* 3 (1956). p. 57-80, 153-184.

Chaffee, John. "The Rise of Empress Liu (969–1033)." *Journal of Song Yuan-Studies* 31 (2001). p. 1-25.

Clart, Philip. "The Concept of Ritual in the Thought of Sima Guang," in: Dieter Kuhn, Helga Stahl (eds.), *Perceptions of Antiquity in Chinese Civilization*. Heidelberg: edition forum, 2008. p. 237-252.

Davis, Richard L. (transl.), *Historical records of the five dynasties, by Ouyang Xiu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

de Bary, William Theodore, with Irene Bloom. *Sources of Chinese tradition, Vol. 1: From earliest time to 1600*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Deng, Xiaonan 邓小南. *Zuzong zhi fa: Bei Song qianqi zhengzhi shulüe* 祖宗之法: 北宋前期政治述略 [Invoking Imperial Ancestor's Instructions in Early Northern Song Politics]. Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sansheng shudian, 2006.

Dirlik, Arif. "Civil Society/Public Sphere in Modern China: As Critical Concepts versus Heralds of Bourgeois Modernity." *Chinese Social Sciences Quarterly* 中國社會科學季刊 4 (Summer 1993). p. 10-17.

Dunnell, Ruth W. *Tanguts and the Tangut State of Ta Xia*. Princeton University, 1983 (Dissertation).

Ebrey, Patricia. *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China: A Social History of Writing about Rites*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991.

Fischer, Johanna. "Fan Chung-yen (989–1052): Das Lebensbild eines chinesischen Staatsmannes." *Oriens Extremus* 2:1-2 (1955). p. 39-85, 142-156.

Fisher, Carney. "The Ritual Dispute of Sung Ying-tsung." *Papers in Far Eastern History* 36 (1987). p. 109-138.

Fogel, Joshua A. *Politics and Sinology. The Case of Naitō Konan 1866–1934*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Foucault, Michel. *Archäologie des Wissens* [Archeology of Knowledge]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981.

Franke, Herbert (ed.). *Sung Biographies*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976.

Gong, Yanming 龚延明. *Songdai guanzhi cidian* 宋代官制辞典 [Dictionary of the administrative system in the Song Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* [The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society]. 3rd ed. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1968.

-----, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* [The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990.

-----, *Faktizität und Geltung: Beiträge zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts und des demokratischen Rechtsstaats* [Between facts and norms: contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998.

Hammers, Roslyn Lee. "Picturing Tools for a Perfect Society: Wang Zhen's 'Book of Agriculture' and the Northern Song Reforms in the Yuan Dynasty." *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 42 (2012). p. 279-308.

- Hartman, Charles. "Cao Xun 曹勳 (1098–1174) and the Legend of Emperor Taizu's Oath." *Conference on Middle Period China, 800–1400*, Harvard University, 2014. Date accessed: Aug. 13, 2014. Available at: <http://www.middleperiodchina2014.org/index.php/conference/2014/paper/view/266/168>
- Hartwell, Robert. "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformation of China, 750–1550." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42:2 (1982). p. 365-442.
- , "New Approaches to the Study of Bureaucratic Factionalism in Sung China: A Hypothesis." *Bulletin of Song-Yuan Studies* 18 (1986). p. 33-40.
- Hsieh, Shan-yüan. *The Life and Thought of Li Kou, 1009–1059*. San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1979.
- Huang, Philip C.C. "'Public Sphere'/'Civil Society' in China?: The Third Realm Between State and Society." *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 216-240.
- Hucker, Charles O. *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- Hymes, Robert. *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-Chou, Chiang-Hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J., and Bryan W. Van Norden (eds.). *Readings in classical Chinese philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2005.
- Ji, Xiao-bin. *Politics and conservatism in northern Song China: the career and thought of Sima Guang (A.D. 1019–1086)*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2005.
- Kern, Martin. "A Note on the Authenticity and Ideology of Shih-Chi 24, *The Book on Music*." *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119:4 (October 1999). p. 673-677.
- Kroher, Martin. "Die Heeresreformen der Regierungsperiode *xining*" [The military Reforms of the Reignperiod *xining* 1068–1077], in: Dieter Kuhn, Ina Asim (eds.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Song-Zeit*. (Würzburger Sinologische Schriften) Heidelberg: edition forum, 2006. p. 55-141.
- Kuhn, Dieter. *Status und Ritus: das China der Aristokraten von den Anfängen bis zum 10. Jahrhundert nach Christus* [Status and ritus: the China of the aristocrats, from its beginnings to the 10th century CE]. (Würzburger Sinologische Schriften) Heidelberg: edition forum 1991.
- , *The Age of Confucian Rule – The Song Transformation of China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. "
- Lamouroux, Christian. "Song Renzong's Court Landscape: Historical Writing and the Creation of a New Political Sphere (1022–1042)." *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* 42 (2012). p. 45-93.
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Legge, James (transl.). *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism; Pt. 2, The Yi King*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966 (reprint of 1882 ed.).

----- . *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism; Pt. 3&4, The Li Kî*. 2 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966 (reprint of 1882 ed.).

----- . *The Chinese Classics: with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes. 4. The She King*. Taipei: SMC Publ., 1991.

----- . *The Chinese Classics: with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes. 5. The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*. Taipei: SMC Publ., 1991.

Levine, Ari Daniel. *Divided by a Common Language – Factional Conflict in Late Northern Song China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

Liu, James T.C. "An Early Sung Reformer: Fan Chung-yen," in: John K. Fairbank (ed.), *Chinese Thoughts and Institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957. p. 105-131.

----- . *Reform in Sung China; Wang An-shih (1021–1086) and his new policies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959.

----- . *Ou-yang Hsiu: An Eleventh-Century Neo-Confucianist*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967.

Liu, William G. *Wrestling for Power: The state and economy in Later Imperial China, 1000–1770*. Harvard University, 2005 (Dissertation).

Liu, Xuebin 刘学斌. *Bei Song xin jiu dangzheng yu shiren zhengzhi xintai yanjiu* 北宋新旧党争与士人政治心态研究 [The factional strife between New and Old party in Northern Song, and the political mentality of the *shi*-elite]. Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 2009.

Lorge, Peter. "Sima Guang on Song Taizong: Politics, History and Historiography." *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* 42 (2012). p. 5-43.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being: a study of the history of an idea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936.

McGrath, Michael. "The Reigns of Jen-tsung (1022–1063) and Ying-tsung (1063–1067)," in: Denis Twitchett, Paul J. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 279-346.

Meyer, Christian. *Ritendiskussionen am Hof der nördlichen Song-Dynastie (1034–1093): Zwischen Ritengelehrsamkeit, Machtkampf und intellektuellen Bewegungen* [Debates on rites at the court of the Northern Song Dynasty]. Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica, 2008.

Moser, Jeffrey. *Recasting Antiquity: Ancient Bronzes and Ritual Hermeneutics in the Song Dynasty*. Harvard University, 2010 (Dissertation).

Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Puett, Michael. *To Become a God: cosmology, sacrifice, and self-divinization in early China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Rankin, Mary B. *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865–1911*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986.

----- . “Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere.” *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 158-182.

Rowe, William. *Hankow, vol. 1: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City; vol 2: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796–1895*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984, 1989.

----- . “The Public Sphere in Modern China.” *Modern China* 16:3 (Jul. 1990). p. 309-329.

----- . “The Problem of ‘Civil Society’ in Late Imperial China.” *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 138-155.

Sariti, Anthony W. *The Political Thought of Ssu-ma Kuang: Bureaucratic Absolutism in the Northern Sung*. Georgetown University, 1970 (Dissertation).

Schirokauer, Conrad, with Robert P. Hymes. “Introduction,” in: Hymes, Schirokauer (eds.), *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. p. 1-58.

Schottenhammer, Angela. “Characteristics of Song Epitaphs,” in: Dieter Kuhn (ed.), *Burial in Song China*. (Würzburger Sinologische Schriften) Heidelberg: edition forum, 1994. p. 253-306

Schwartz, Benjamin. “Some Polarities in Confucian Thought,” in: David Nivison, Arthur Wright (eds.), *Confucianism in Action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: p. 50-62.

Seligman, Adam, with Robert Weller, Michael Puett, and Bennett Simon. *Ritual and its Consequences. An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Si, Shunwei 斯舜威. *Zaixiang Shijia – Liang Song Lü shi zhengzhi jituan jilüe* 宰相世家-两宋吕氏政治集团纪略 [A family of chancellors – brief record of the political circle of the Lü clan during the two Song Dynasties]. Shanghai: Dongfang Chubanshixue Zhongxin, 2011.

Skinner, Quentin. *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Skonicki, Douglas. “Employing the Right Kind of Men: The Role of Cosmological Argumentation in the Qingli Reforms.” *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* 38 (2008). p. 39-98.

Smith, Paul J. *Taxing Heaven’s Storehouse: Horses, Bureaucrats, and the Destruction of the Sichuan Tea Industry, 1074–1224*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

----- . “*Shuihu zhuan* and the military Subculture of the Northern Song, 960–1127.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 66:2 (Dec. 2006). p. 363-422.

-----, “Shen-tsung’s Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shih,” in: Denis Twitchett, Paul J. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 347-483.

-----, “Anatomies of Reform: The Qingli Reforms of Fan Zhongyan (ca. 1043-44) and the New Policies of Wang Anshi (1069–1085) Compared.” *Conference on Middle Period China, 800–1400*, Harvard University, 2014. Date accessed: Jul. 30, 2014. Available at: <http://www.middleperiodchina2014.org/index.php/conference/2014/paper/view/243/147>

Stadt, Jochen, with Tobias Voigt, and Stefan Wolle. *Feindbild Springer. Ein Verlag und seine Gegner* [Springer, the enemy: a publishing house and its adversaries]. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009.

Steele, John. *The I-Li or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*. 2 vols. Taipei: Ch’engwen Publ. Co., 1966 (reprint of 1917 ed.).

Wakeman, Frederic. “The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture.” *Modern China* 19:2 (Apr. 1993). p. 108-138.

Williamson, H. R. *Wang An shih: A Chinese Statesman and Educationalist of the Sung Dynasty*. 2 vols. London: Probsthain, 1935.

Wechsler, Howard J. “Factionism in Early T’ang Government,” in: Arthur F. Wright, Denis Twitchett (eds.). *Perspectives on the T’ang*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973. p. 87-120.

Zeng, Zaozhuang 曾枣庄, *Wenxing cuican – Bei Song jiayou er nian gongju kaolun* 文星璀璨 – 北宋嘉祐二年工举考论 [The splendor of literary stars – a study of the civil-service examination in the second year of *jiayou* of Northern Song]. Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2010.

Zhang, Cong Ellen. “Writing Fan Zhongyan's Epitaphs.” *Conference on Middle Period China, 800–1400*, Harvard University, 2014. Date accessed: 30 Jul. 2014. Available at: <http://www.middleperiodchina2014.org/index.php/conference/2014/paper/view/218>

Zhao, Dixian 赵澥贤. “Shilun Bei Song bianfapai junshigaige de chenggong 试论北宋变法派军事改革的成功” [Preliminary discussion of the success of the military reforms of the Northern Song reform party]. *Song Liao Jin Yuan shi* (1998:2). p. 3-20.

Zhu, Jianping 祝建平. “Renzongchao Liu Taihou zhuanquan yu Songdai houfei ganzheng 仁宗朝刘太后专权与宋代后妃干政 [Empress Dowager Liu monopolizing power in the reign of Renzong, and the interference of Song Dynasty palace women with politics].” *Shilin* (1997:2). p. 34-39.